

# HINDI LITERATURE

F. E. KEAY

THE HERITAGE OF INDIA  
SERIES



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*Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honourable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.*

No section of the population of India can afford to neglect her ancient heritage. The treasures of knowledge, wisdom, and beauty which are contained in her literature, philosophy, art, and regulated life are too precious to be lost. Every citizen of India needs to use them, if he is to be a cultured modern Indian. This is as true of the Christian, the Muslim, the Zoroastrian as of the Hindu. But, while the heritage of India has been largely explored by scholars, and the results of their toil are laid out for us in books, they cannot be said to be really available for the ordinary man. The volumes are in most cases expensive, and are often technical and difficult. Hence this series of cheap books has been planned by a group of Christian men, in order that every educated Indian, whether rich or poor, may be able to find his way into the treasures of India's past. Many Europeans, both in India and elsewhere, will doubtless be glad to use the series.

The utmost care is being taken by the General Editors in selecting writers, and in passing manuscripts for the press. To every book two tests are rigidly applied: everything must be scholarly, and everything must be sympathetic. The purpose is to bring the best out of the ancient treasures, so that it may be known, enjoyed, and used.

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THE HERITAGE OF INDIA SERIES

# A HISTORY OF HINDI LITERATURE

BY

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*Christ Church House, Groningen and LL. Amsterdam, Holland*

AUTHOR OF

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## PREFACE TO FIRST EDITION

THE purpose of these volumes of *The Heritage of India Series* on the vernacular literatures is to provide, in each case, a clear and trustworthy outline of the history of the literature. Necessarily, nothing more can be compressed into a hundred pages; and, when one of the greater literatures comes under review, it is impossible, within the limits, to do justice to the whole. In this volume great care has been taken to sketch the historic movements down to the time of Hariśchandra; but no attempt has been made to give a detailed account of more recent literature.

Amongst the many persons who have supplied information, or given other help, I must especially thank the Editors of this Series; the Rev. G. J. Dano, who kindly read the book in manuscript and offered valuable criticisms; and the Rev. Dr. W. C. Macdougall and Mr. M. T. Kennedy, who have carefully read through the proofs. I am also much indebted to Mr. Kallu Singh and Mr. Sakhawut Masih, masters of my own school, for help in translating some of the extracts.

FRANK E. KEAY.

*Jubbulpore, August, 1920.*



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## THE HINDI LANGUAGE AND ITS NEIGHBOURS

**The Indo-Aryan Languages.**—The Indo-Aryan languages form one branch of the great Indo-European family of languages, which are now spoken over Europe and a large part of Western and Southern Asia. Somewhere near the borderland of Europe and Asia lived the people who spoke the original language from which these various languages have been derived. One great class of this people, called the Aryans, migrated eastwards towards the Oxus, but as they advanced further were split up into two sections, and their language also developed on two different lines. One of these two forms of language became the parent of the Iranian family of languages (Medic, Pahlavi, Persian, etc.). The other branch of the Aryan people pushed on into the valley of the Kabul, and thence into the plains of North India. The migration of these peoples was spread over a long period of time. Those who came into India are known as Indo-Aryans. The Indo-Aryan language received a literary culture in quite ancient times and its literary form became known as Sanskrit, that is the 'purified' language. This polished literary dialect became fixed, but the ordinary speech of the people, which is called Prākṛit, that is 'natural,' or 'unartificial,' gradually changed. Diphthongs and harsh combinations were softened, but the language still remained, like Sanskrit, synthetic. The dialects of different areas began to differ more and more from one another. Some of the older forms of the Prākṛits meanwhile, like Sanskrit, became fixed and received literary culture, such for instance as Pāli. In the last stage of the Prākṛits, before the modern Indo-Aryan languages developed from them, they are known as Apabhraṃśas. These are the direct

parents of the modern vernaculars of North India, namely, Hindi, Punjabi, Marāṭhī, etc., which came into existence somewhere about A.D. 1000, though the date differs considerably in the case of different languages. These modern languages are no longer synthetic but analytic.

**Hindi.**—It is most important to understand clearly what we mean by Hindi, as the word is often used ambiguously. It is often, for instance, applied in a loose sense to the vernacular speech of the whole of North India between the Punjab and Sindh on the West, and Bengal on the East. But the philological researches of scholars, such as Sir George Grierson, have shown that there are really four chief languages in this area, namely, Rājasthānī, Western Hindi, Eastern Hindi, and Bihārī, each having a different parentage. Bihārī really belongs to a group of languages of which Bengali is another member. Western Hindi is closely connected in origin with Punjabi. The word Hindi is also often used to denote modern literary High Hindi in contra-distinction to Urdu; but both High Hindi and Urdu were, as will be shown below, developed from a dialect of Western Hindi. Hindūstānī (or Hindostānī) is also a name used sometimes to denote the vernaculars of all Hindūstān, that is the country between the Punjab and Sindh and Bengal, but is also sometimes used to mean the simpler speech which is the *lingua franca* of modern India, and of which both Urdu and High Hindi are literary developments.

**Scope of this Book.**—The literature whose history will be described in this book will include Rājasthānī, Western Hindi, Eastern Hindi and Bihārī literature, but not Urdu. It may seem at first sight somewhat arbitrary to group together the literatures of these languages which are believed to have been distinct in development, and when Western Hindi, for instance, is more closely connected in origin with Punjabi, and Bihārī with Bengali, than with the other languages here grouped with them. Moreover Urdu, whose literature is here excluded, is developed from a dialect of Western Hindi. But the justification for grouping these literatures together lies in this, that whereas Punjabi and Bengali and Urdu have developed modern literatures which are proceeding each on its own lines, the languages whose literary history is contained in this

book have become closely connected in their literary development. In the areas where they are spoken 'High Hindi' has come to be accepted as a literary language by almost all those who do not use Urdu, and though the older vernaculars are still used for poetical compositions, not one of them is developing a separate prose literature of its own. Moreover, though considered by scholars as distinct, they are closely related languages which have mutually influenced each other, and the literature of any one of these vernaculars is to a large extent understood by those who speak one of the others. These languages are spoken by over a hundred million people.

As the literature dealt with in the following pages is really connected with distinct though cognate languages it is more accurate to describe it, as Sir George Grierson has done, as the 'Modern Vernacular Literature of Hindostān.' But for the sake of convenience and to avoid circumlocution it will generally be referred to here as 'Hindi Literature.' The bulk of it is written in Western Hindi or Eastern Hindi. Bihāri literature is not very extensive and, except for the lyrics of Vidyapati, not very important. Rājasthāni literature mostly consists of bardic chronicles.

Urdu as a literary language has an important point of difference from Hindi in the metres it employs. These follow Persian models, and the substance of Urdu poetry is largely influenced by Persian themes.

**Dialects.**—The chief dialects of *Rājasthāni* are Mewāṭī, Mārwāṭī, Jaipurī and Mālvi. Of these Mārwāṭī is the chief literary dialect. It is also called Dingal, and in this connection is distinguished from Pingal, the name given in Rājputāna to the Brāj Bhāṣhā dialect of Western Hindi, which was also used in this area as a literary dialect.

*Western Hindi* has as its principal dialects, Bāngarī, to the west of the Ganges in the highlands of the South-Eastern Punjab; Brāj Bhāṣhā, the language spoken in Muttra and the surrounding district, which is the chief dialect of Western Hindi for poetry; Kanaujī (very similar to Brāj Bhāṣhā), which is spoken in the lower part of the central Doab and the country to the north; Bundelī, in Bundelkhand and a good portion of the Narbada valley in the Central Provinces;

and another dialect spoken in the neighbourhood of Delhi and Meerut. Delhi being for a long time the headquarters of the Muhammadan conquerors of North India, it was from the dialect of this district that the *lingua franca* of the Mughal camp originated. A great many words of Persian and Arabic origin were introduced into this dialect as well as those of Punjābī and Rājasthānī, and the Persian character was used for writing it. The word 'Urdu' literally means 'Camp.' Urdu was the camp language. Muhammadan influence extended its use far and wide, and it eventually became a literary language. Modern 'High Hindi' was developed from Urdu by the exclusion of Persian and Arabic words and the substitution of those of pure Indian origin, Sanskrit or Hindi. The name Khari Boli (i.e. 'pure speech') is sometimes used by Indian scholars both for the original dialect of Delhi and Meerut, and for the modern High Hindi developed by Laṭo Ji Lal; but they are not identical, as will be shown later in a subsequent chapter when the circumstances of the formation of modern literary Hindi are related.

The dialects of *Eastern Hindi*, from North to South are Avadhī, Baghelī and Chhotaṅgarī. Of these the chief literary dialect is Avadhī, spoken in the country of Ayodhya (Oudh). Avadhī is also known as Baiswārī.

*Bihārī* has three principal dialects, namely Maithilī, Bhojpuri and Magahī. Maithilī is the chief literary dialect, and practically all the works which have come down to us are in this dialect. It is spoken in the region which formed the old kingdom of Mithilā, that is in Bihār north of the Ganges.

**The Hindi Alphabet and Written Character.**—The alphabet used for Hindi and the other languages included with it in this book is the same as that of Sanskrit, and is arranged in the same way, that is on phonetic principles. One or two of the Sanskrit letters are not used however in Hindi. The written character is generally what is called the Devanāgarī (or Nāgarī), which is also used for Sanskrit. But other forms are also used. Mahājanī (or Sarāfi) and Banīauṭī are only used in business. They are both modifications of Kāyathī (or Kaithī). This word is from Kāyath, or Kāyasth, the name of the writer-caste amongst the Hindus. Kāyathī character was originally derived from the Devanāgarī by slight

alterations which better adapt it to the purpose of writing quickly. It is used chiefly in the Eastern portion of the area with which we are concerned, but even there is not so common as Devanāgarī.

**Vocabulary.**—The vast majority of words used in the languages we are considering are those which have come down from the original Indo-Aryan language through the long development of the centuries. But in the language of today there are often found words which are direct borrowings from Sanskrit. These are called *Tatama* words ('the same as that') to distinguish them from *Tadbhava* words ('of the nature of that'), which are those that have undergone change in the long process of development. In many cases *Tatama* and *Tadbhava* forms of the same word or root co-exist in the language, such as *Yogy* and *Yog* ('fit, worthy'). Words have also been borrowed from Persian. We find these even in the works of the great writers such as Tulsī Dās, and though some modern authors affect to write 'pure Hindi,' few books can be found which do not contain some words of Persian origin. Some Portuguese, and nowadays many English words, have also found their way into the language.

**Hindi Prosody.**—There is probably no language in which prosody has been more elaborately developed than in Hindi. Its system is derived ultimately from the principles which govern Sanskrit poetry. It does not, like English, depend on accent, but, like the classic poetry of Greece and Rome, is based on the quantity of the syllables, long or short. But rhyme is also used almost universally, and in Hindi poetry a rhyme means that not only the last syllable of a line, but the last two syllables at least, correspond with those of another line. A good deal of liberty is allowed in respect of orthography and even of grammatical construction, but the rules for the various metres are very complicated. The result, however, in the hands of a skilful poet is the production of poetry the form and rhythm of which has a wonderful charm, probably not surpassed in any language. The number of metres recognized in books of Hindi prosody is very large. A few only of the principal ones can be mentioned here. A *dohā* (or *dohrā*) is a couplet each line of which contains twenty-four *mātras* or instants, divided up again into feet according

to a recognized plan. A *mātra* denotes the length of time occupied in the utterance of a short vowel. Long vowels and diphthongs are regarded as consisting of two *mātras*. The *dohā* is the most popular and frequent of all metres. The *avathā* is an inverted *dohā*, that is the second half of each line of the *dohā* changes place with the first half. The *chaupāī* ranks with the *dohā* in popularity. It consists of four lines, each of which has sixteen *mātras*. Other much-used metres are the *kundalīyā*, the *chhappai*, the *kāvya*, the *surariya* and the *kavitta*. Many metres are specially used in the composition of verses which are intended to be sung. In these the same rhyme is often continued throughout all the lines of the poem.

### The Family of Indo-Aryan Languages

(The languages whose literature is described in this book are printed in thick type.)

		( <i>Apabhraṃśa</i> )	( <i>Modern Languages</i> )
Indo-Aryan Language	Prākṛita (Vernacular)	Unknown ...	Kāshmiri
		Unknown ...	Kobistanī
		Unknown ...	Lahndī
			(Western Panjābī)
		Vijchādī ...	Sindhi
		Gaujari ...	Gujarātī
		Sauraseni ...	Panjābī
			Western Hindi
		Avanti ...	Rājasthānī
			Pohārī
		Arjhamāgadhī ...	Eastern Hindi
			Bihārī
	Sanskrit (Literary)	Māgadhī ...	Bengālī
			Oṛissā
		Mahārāṣṭrī ...	Assamese
			Mārāṭhī

## II

### A GENERAL SURVEY OF HINDI LITERATURE

AFTER the death of King Harsha (A.D. 646 or 647), who had built up a large Empire in North India, there was a long period of confusion and disorder. The unity of Indian history is lost until the Muhammadan conquests again restored a government strong enough to become a paramount power. During this period the Rājput clans came into prominence and various Rājput principalities took shape which were destined to play an important part in subsequent history. These kingdoms were often at war with one another, but the incursions of the Muhammadans from the West frequently united them to meet the common foe. Although Kabul, the Punjab and Sindh had previously fallen into the hands of the Muhammadan invaders, the real conquest of India did not begin till A.D. 1175 when Muhammad Ghori commenced his attacks. In 1191 the Muhammadan progress induced the Hindu kings to compose their quarrels and form a great confederacy under Prithvirāj (also called Prithvirāj or Rai Pithorā), the Chauhan ruler of Ajmer and Delhi. The Hindus were at first victorious in a battle at Tarain, but in the following year were defeated in the same place and Prithvirāj was captured and killed. Delhi was soon occupied and the Muhammadan advance continued till, under Muhammad-bin-Tughlak in 1340, it attained its maximum extent. But though many Hindu kingdoms fell, and many strongholds in Rājputāna were captured, the Rājput clans reasserted themselves and were never completely subdued. Many new kingdoms were set up, and later Muhammadan sovereigns often found it more profitable to make alliances with the Rājput monarchs than to attack them.



It was during this period that the modern vernaculars of India were taking shape, and the earliest modern vernacular literature of Hindūstān appeared in the form of the bardic chronicles of Rājputāna. The stirring times in which they lived produced ample themes for the royal bards, and the liberal patronage of monarchs encouraged their labours. Though full of panegyric and embellished with many legends, and therefore not to be taken as sober history, their poems nevertheless are a stirring record of the desperate struggles between the Hindu kingdoms and their Muhammadan invaders, and of the heroism and chivalry which such a period called forth. The greatest name in the literature of this period is that of Chand Bardai, the bard of Prithvirāj. Contemporary with Chand was Jagadīsh, while a famous bard of the middle of the fourteenth century was Śaṅkar Dhar, who sang the prowess of the valorous Hammir, Prince of Ranthambhor.

This rise of the worship of Rāma, which took place about the beginning of the fifteenth century, gave another great impetus to vernacular literature. One branch of Vaiṣṇavas worshipped Viṣṇu under the form of Kṛṣṇa and this form of worship had long been popular. Now, largely owing to the great influence of Rāmānanda, others made Rāma their principal object of worship. A later development, due in some measure to Muhammadan influence, and in which Kabir was the first great teacher, was in the direction of a non-idolotrous theism. All these various movements were part of a great religious revival which was widespread amongst the people, and all began to use the vernacular for their literature. From this time on the vernacular literature was mostly dominated by religious ideals and almost entirely on the lines which had been laid down by the Vaiṣṇava reformers. This period begins about 1400 and includes such poets as Nāṁdev, Kabir, Vidyāpati, Mīrā Bāi and Mahā Muhammad. The earlier bards of Rājputāna wrote in a time of transition, using a language which was still full of Prākṛit forms, and this was the period of the infancy of Hindi literature. But when the poets of this next period composed their works, the language spoken was practically the same as the vernacular speech of today; and, as the earliest authors in this language, they had to feel their way, for in using the vernacular

for their poems they were making a great venture. This was the period of the youth of Hindi literature.

The golden age of the vernacular literature of Hindūstān begins about 1550. The Mughal sovereigns not only established a strong rule, but were liberal patrons of literature and art. Under Akbar (1556-1605), Jahangir (1605-1627) and Shāh Jahān (1627-1658) the Muhammadan rule in India reached its highest point of outward magnificence and this was also the period of the greatest glory in Hindi literature. It has often been pointed out how it synchronizes with the Elizabethan age of English literature, and that at this very time England and India first came into real contact with each other. This period was marked by the introduction of an artistic influence into the literature, leading to a greater polish in versification and form, and the first attempts to systematize the art of poetry by such writers as Keshv Dās and others. This was the age of the greatest stars of Hindi literature—Tulsi Dās, Sūr Dās and Bihārī Lāl, as well as of other great writers like the Tripathī brothers, Dev Kāvī and Senāpatī. It was the period when the Sikh *Granth* was compiled and when many new sects were formed, like the Dādūpanthis, which produced a great deal of religious verse of a high order. The end of the period however, during the eighteenth century, coinciding with the time of the decay of the Mughal Empire, was a time of decline in the high quality of Hindi literature, and does not contain many writers of first-rate excellence.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century a new influence came into Hindi literature through contact with the culture of Europe. In the eighteenth century the English had been struggling in India with the French for mastery, but now that conflict had been decided and the English supremacy was further established by the break-up of the old Mughal Empire and the weakening of the Marāṭha power. English influence now began to make itself more and more felt in Indian affairs, and amongst other things the contact of India with the culture of the West had the effect of stimulating many new ideas, while the sense of security which freedom from internal disorder gave, encouraged the native genius of India to reassert itself. Hence there began about this time a

mighty literary renaissance in India which is still in progress. At the beginning of this period Lallū Ji Lal laid the foundation of modern Hindi prose and also created the literary dialect which was to be its principal medium. The printing press now began to spread literature far and wide. The revival of Hindi poetry was led by Hārīschandra, and this period saw also the rise of the Hindi drama.

The principle adopted in this book in dividing up the literature into periods is as follows: First of all the infancy of Hindi literature, connected with the bardic chronicles, is described; and after that a new period is dated from each point where an important new influence begins to modify the literature. These periods begin (1) about 1400, when the religious influence of the Vaisnava movements began to affect Hindi literature; (2) about 1550, when a new artistic influence makes itself felt; and (3) about 1800, when the literature began to be affected by the modern influence which came from contact with the West. In each period the literature that shows the new spirit in its fullness will first of all be described and then the other forms in turn, and something will be said as to how far each group or each writer is influenced by the new ideas.

### III

## EARLY BARDIC CHRONICLES

(1150-1400)

**The Earliest Poets.**—During the time when the Rājput clans were establishing their power, and while they were struggling with the Muhammadan invaders, every court had its bards who celebrated in song the valour and heroism of their patrons and their race. These bards belonged to guilds, which were also castes, and there are said to have been *Chāraṇas*, *Bhāṭas*, *Sevagas* and *Pancholis*. The *Chāraṇas* and *Bhāṭas* both claimed Brahmanic descent. The language used at first by these bards must have been the local *Prākṛit*, but gradually the *Prākṛit* developed into the modern vernacular. A number of bards are mentioned by tradition as having composed poems between A.D. 700 and 1150. The chief of these are *Pūshya* (or *Panda*), *Kedar*, *Ananya Dāsa*, *Masaud*, *Qutub Ali* and *Akaram Paiz*. Their work, however, has not survived, and it is therefore impossible to say whether the language they used is to be reckoned as *Prākṛit* or as the modern vernacular. A poetic chronicle of the ruling family of Mewār, called the *Khamān Rāś*, which dates from the sixteenth century, is said to have been founded on a work written in the ninth century, but no fragment of the original has survived. In 1143 a certain Kumār Pāl became king of Gujarāt, his capital being at Anhilwār. In 1159, under the influence of the Jain scholar, Hemachandra, he became a Jain, and at a rather late date Hemachandra wrote a romantic poem in *Prākṛit* entitled *Kumār Pāl Chauritra*. An anonymous bardic chronicle, called by the same name, in the early speech of the modern vernacular is said to date from the middle of the thirteenth century, and is probably a free adaptation of the *Prākṛit* poem. Visala Deva (Bisal Dev) was the king of Ajmer in A.D. 1001, when Mahmūd of

Glazni made one of his raids into India. He is celebrated in a short poem called *Bhāl Dvī Rāo*, the date of which is unknown, but which has been considered by some to belong to the thirteenth century. Till these poems are dated and their language thoroughly examined by scholars, it is not possible to say what evidence they give as to the date when the modern vernacular became clearly distinguished from the earlier Prākṛit, and as even the *Prithī Rāj Rāo*, which is dated in 1191, is said by such an eminent authority as Sir George Grierson to be 'abounding in pure Apabhraṃśa Saurāṣṭri Prākṛit forms,' it would be rash in the absence of further evidence to place the date of the emergence of the modern vernaculars of Hindūstān much earlier than the beginning of the twelfth century.

Chand Bardai.—Prithī Rāj (also called Prithvī Rāj or Rai Pithorā), who was born 1159 and killed in 1192, was the Chauhan ruler of Ajmer and Delhi at the time of the battles of Tarnin, in the second of which he was captured and afterwards slain. He was a great patron of literature, and besides Ananya Dās, mentioned above, his court was also attended by the famous bard *Chand Bardai*. Chand Bardai belonged to an old family of bards, and the famous poet, Sūr Dās, is said by some to have been one of his descendants. He came to the court of Prithī Rāj and was appointed as his minister and poet laureate. His poetical works were collected by Amar Singh of Mewār in the seventeenth century, and it is probable that they were then recast and partially modernized though still full of archaic language. Chand's chief work is the *Prithī Rāj Rāo*. In this famous poem of sixty-nine books and 100,000 stanzas he gives the life of his patron and the history of the time in which he wrote. Chand Bardai and his patron were both killed after the battle of Tarnin in 1192. Legend and fiction are mixed up with history in the *Prithī Rāj Rāo*. The repeated conflicts related to have taken place between Prithī Rāj and Sultān Shihābuddīn seem to be quite unhistorical, and the Mughals are brought on the stage thirty years before they really appeared in Indian history. It is therefore doubtful whether the document in its entirety is a contemporary poem, but the language used, which is transitional in character and abounds in strange forms which have long since ceased to be

used, makes it seem likely that the original core of the poem is certainly the work of Chand Bardāi, and that it is one of the earliest poems in Hindi which have survived. Owing to the difficulty of the language it is a poem not easy to read even for scholars, but those who have studied it have a high opinion of its literary merits. It is of immense value from the point of view of linguistic study.

The following lines are taken from the twentieth book of Chand's epic. The fair Padmāvatī, daughter of Padam Sen, an opponent of Prithi Rāj, had heard of the nobility of Prithi Rāj, as he had of her beauty, and when her marriage was arranged with another, she sent a message by a parrot to Prithi Rāj to come and rescue her. Prithi Rāj came with an army to seize her as his bride:

Watching the road in the direction of Delhi,  
Happy was she when the parrot returned,  
Hearing the news, glad were her eyes,  
The maiden was clad with the tokens of love,  
She tore off the dirty clothes from her body,  
Purified, and anointed, and adorned herself with robes,  
Called for priceless jewels (for her person) from head to foot,  
Arrayed with the tokens of the king of love,  
Filling a golden tray with pearls,  
Lighting a lamp she waved it round,  
Taking her confidence with her, boldly the maiden  
Gone as Rakini went to meet Murāri;  
Worshipping Gauri, revering Śankar;  
Circumambulating and touching their feet.  
Then on seeing King Prithi Rāj,  
She smiled bashfully, hiding her face through shame,  
Seizing her hand, putting her on horseback,  
The King, the Lord of Delhi, took her away,  
The rumour spread that, outside the city,  
They are carrying off Padmāvatī by force.  
Drums are beat, there is saddling of horse and elephant,  
They ran, armed, in all directions,  
'Seize! Seize!' shouted each warrior,  
Rage possessed the heroes and their king,  
When King Prithi Rāj was going in front  
With all his army behind him,  
There the horsemen advancing arrived;  
King meeting King, the warriors joined in battle,  
When Prithi Rāj the King turns rein,  
The heavens stand still, the world-serpent shakes,  
The chiefs and heroes all look (awful) as death,  
Eager for blood on rushes the King

The bows let fly countless arrows,  
 The deadly blades drew blood.  
 From the sweat of the wounds of the heroes on the field  
 A thick stream flows, and dyes the sand,  
 As warriors of the hardy breed,  
 On the field fell heads and headless trunks of the foe.  
 The foe fell on the field of battle;  
 Turning his face towards Dehli,  
 Having won the battle, went Prithi Rāj,  
 All the chiefs were glad.  
 He took Palanqvati with him  
 Rejoicing, King Prithi Rāj.<sup>1</sup>

Chand Bardāi's son, *Jalkān*, is also said to have been a poet and possibly some parts of the *Rām* were composed by him.

**Jagnayak.**—*Jagnāyāk* (or *Jagnik*) was a contemporary of Chand Bardāi and attended the court of Paramardī (Parmā) of Mahohā in Bundelkhand, who was a rival of Prithi Rāj. His works have not survived, unless we have in the *Mahohā Khand* (or *Alhā Khand*), which has been described as a spurious canto of Chand's epic, a poem which was written by Jagnāyāk. This poem has been handed down by oral tradition and exists in many recensions which differ from one another both in language and subject matter. It is still sung by professional singers in India and the language is always modernized to suit the dialect of the reciter. The heroes of this poem are Alhā and Ūdal (or Ūdan). Portions of one recension have been translated into English ballad metre by Mr. Waterfield, under the title of 'The Nine-Lakh Chain or the Maro Feud.' A few stanzas will give some idea of this poem. It relates Alhā's victory over King Jambay:

The warriors staggered, they scattered and broke,  
 In hope their lives to save;  
 When Jambay saw they fled, he spoke,  
 And his elephant onward drove.  
 'Mahohā's champion, Devī's son,  
 Now settle thy cause with me;  
 Alive from the field shall go but one,  
 So turn by turn strike me.'  
 'I may not strike, by the Chandel law;  
 Do thou strike first, O King';

<sup>1</sup> Translation by Mr. John Beames, in Vol. XXXVIII of the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* (1869), pp. 152, 153.

Then a good red bow did Jamhay draw,  
And fited the notch to string.

The aim was good, the string did twang,  
Fast did the arrow fly;  
Across the bowds Alhā sprang,  
And the shaft went whizzing by.

Then his javelin flew as near they drew,  
Now how may Alhā bide?  
Queen Sūrada's care at his right hand there  
She turned the spear aside.

'Now hear, Bāndiphar,' Jamhay spake,  
'Twice hast thou foiled my blow;  
In peace thy way to Mahohā take,  
For thrice thou 'scap'st not so.'

But Alhā there his breast made bare,  
And did to the Rājā cry;  
'No part of a Kahatci's trade it were,  
From the battle-crouch to fly.'

'There are homes in heaven stand ready for all,  
Tomorrow if not today;  
And if in Mīro this tide shall fall,  
My name shall live for aye.'

'One chance is left thee, King, to save,  
And see thou miss no more.'  
Then drew the King his shining glaive,  
And thrice he smote full sore.

No hurt on Alhā's body happ'd  
His shield was lifted high;  
At length the sword of Jamhay snapp'd,  
Then wast he death was nigh.

'I have hewn down elephants with this blade,  
And lopped their limbs away;  
Its master's need has it now betrayed,  
My life is lost today!'

'Now, Rājā, now my stroke take thou,'  
And his elephant on he drove;  
Howda to howda, tusk to tusk,  
Close met the champions strove.

Then Alhā forward dash'd his shield,  
With this blow he dealt a blow;  
The elephant's driver was hurl'd to the field,  
And he waver'd to and fro.

Then Jamhay drew his dagger keen,  
Long time their steel they plied;



On Ālā's body no hurt was seen,  
 "Now break the foe," he cried,  
 Purchased with'd his iron chain,  
 Dashed the hounds to the ground;  
 Soon Ālā lighted on the plain,  
 And fast his arms he bound.<sup>5</sup>

**Sarang Dhar.**—*Sarang Dhar*, a bard who flourished in the middle of the fourteenth century, is said to have been a descendant of Chand Bardai. He is the reputed author of two poems known as the *Harisir Rās* and the *Harisir Kāvya*, which are chronicles of the royal house of Ranthambhor. The valour of Harisir in his struggle against the Emperor Alā-ud-din, at whose hands he received his death, is very famous. Sarang Dhar is also the author of an anthology of Sanskrit lyric stanzas called the *Sāragadhara Paddhati*, which was published in 1563.

These early bards had a long line of successors, some of whom will be mentioned later on. Their chronicles are valuable not only as literature, but as a record of the times in which they lived. Like the old chronicles of other lands, they contain much that is legendary and unreliable as history, but the light which they throw on the period in which they were written is nevertheless of very great value.

**Other Poets of this Period.**—One or two other writers who are considered to belong to this period may also be mentioned. These are *Bhupati*, who wrote at the end of the thirteenth century; and *Nalla Singh*, *Mulla Dāud*, and *Amir Khusro*, who flourished about the fourteenth century. The latter was a Persian poet to whom Hindi verses are also ascribed. There is also a certain Gorakhnāth who is regarded as the founder of an order of Yogis, and as the author of both Sanskrit and Hindi works. Some doubt has been expressed as to his being a historical person at all, but it seems likely that he was, and that he lived about A.D. 1200. The Hindi works, which include one in prose, are almost certainly not written by him. They are probably the works of his followers. They have been placed by some as early as the middle of the fourteenth century, but their date at present must be regarded as very uncertain.

<sup>5</sup> *Calcutta Review*, Vol. LXIII (1876), pp. 414 ff.

## IV

### EARLY BHAKTI POETS

(1400-1550)

**The Vaishnava Revival.**—A new development in Hindi literature was caused by the growth of the Vaishnava movement in North India. The Muhammadian conquest had been a time of great difficulty for the Hindu religion. Scholars had been dispersed, idols broken, and temples cast down. But though Hinduism suffered severely it was not destroyed, and a great impetus was to be given to the Vaishnava form of the Hindu faith. The Vaishnava religious movements of North India at this time fall into three groups, Rāmāite, Kṛṣṇāite, and devatic. But all the various sects have many points in common. A personal God, who is full of love and pity for his devotees, is the object of worship, and towards him devotion (*bhakti*) is demanded as the most important requirement from those who would obtain release. The movement as a whole was a revolt against the cold intellectualism of Brahmanic philosophy and the lifeless formalism of mere ceremonial. It was essentially a popular religious movement, and this is emphasized by its use of the vernacular, rather than Sanskrit, in the vast amount of literature it produced. This constitutes the importance of the movement from the point of view of Hindi literature.

**Ramananda's Predecessors.**—It is generally agreed that it was Rāmānanda who gave the greatest impulse to the religious revival in North India about this time, but there were others who were his predecessors and the harbingers of the movement. The *Adi Granth* of the Sikhs, compiled by Guru Arjun in 1604, has preserved some of the earliest specimens we possess of Hindi poetry of the *bhakti* movement. Among those devotees (*bhagats*) of whose compositions fragments have been preserved in the *Granth*, and

who are earlier than Rāmānanda, are Sadnā and Nāmdev. The *Granth* contains also a fragment of a certain *Jaidev* who has sometimes been identified with Jayadeva, the author of the Sanskrit *Gītā Govinda*, who lived towards the end of the twelfth century. But the identification is more than doubtful and the date and the circumstances of this Jaidev are unknown.

*Sadnā*, who probably flourished about the beginning of the fifteenth century, is said to have been born in Sindh and to have been a butcher (*kaṭṭī*). He gave up his trade and became a devotee. Only a couple of his hymns are preserved in the *Granth*.

*Nāmdev* belonged to the Marāṭhā country and was a devotee of Viṭhobā at Paṇḍharpūr. He probably flourished between about 1400 and 1430. By caste he was a tailor, and according to the legends preserved about him he showed great devotion in his boyhood, but afterwards for a time lived an evil life in company with a band of dacoits. He repented, however, and became a great devotee. He is the author of a considerable number of Marāṭhā hymns, but he was a noteworthy religious leader in the north of India also, and wrote many verses in Hindi. A considerable number of hymns composed by him are in the *Granth*. Nāmdev is a most interesting figure and probably one of the first leaders of the new religious revival which began about this time in North India.

*Rāmānanda*, who lived probably from about 1400 to 1470, was an ascetic who somewhere about the year 1430 began to preach that the eternal God should be worshipped under the name of Rāma, that Rāma alone was the source of release from the evils of transmigration, and that this should be sought by fervent devotion (*bhakti*) towards him. The way had already been prepared by the preaching of others on similar lines, and Rāmānanda evidently met with such success that he took up his residence in Benares and made that the headquarters of the new movement. He was undoubtedly one of the most important Hindu religious leaders in North India, for not only is the sect of Rāmānandīs, which acknowledges him as its direct founder, still very large, but a great many other sects owe their first impulse to the movement he

initiated, or else were founded by those who were originally his disciples or members of his sect. As a writer, however, Rāmānanda does not hold an important place. Hymns in Hindi purporting to have been written by him are still preserved, one of them in the *Adi Granth*. In this hymn he seems to be defining an invitation to go and worship Vishnu in a temple, on the ground that God is all-pervading and that he has found God in his heart. It must not be inferred from this, however, that Rāmānanda forbade idolatry though he may have criticised it. He preached a vivid faith in the reality of the one personal God, spiritual and invisible, whom he called Rāma, but no break was made with idolatry, the Hindu pantheon, or the old mythology. Nor did Rāmānanda throw over the system of caste. It is true that, like other *bhakti* teachers before his day, he was willing to acknowledge that even outcastes, by means of *bhakti*, could obtain release, and that amongst his personal disciples there are said to have been not only a Śūdra, a Jāt, and an outcaste, but even a Muhammadan weaver and a woman. But there is no evidence that he modified the social rules of caste in the slightest. From the point of view of Hindi literature the significance of the movement initiated by Rāmānanda was depending for its literature almost entirely on the vernacular. The followers and successors of Rāmānanda practically gave up the use of Sanskrit, and this of course gave a great impetus to the development of Hindi literature.

**Rāmānanda's Disciples.**—The immediate personal disciples of Rāmānanda were, according to tradition, twelve in number, and Hindi compositions of some of these have been preserved. *Pipā* was the Rājā of Gagaraungarh and is said to have been born in the year 1425. On becoming a disciple of Rāmānanda he abdicated his sovereignty and became a mendicant. *Dhamā*, the Jāt, is said to have been born in 1415. *Sen* was a barber at the court of the Rājā of Rewah. Of these three disciples of Rāmānanda only a few hymns have been preserved in the *Adi Granth*. *Bhoteśānand*, another disciple, is the reputed author of an explanation in Hindi of the Vedānta system of philosophy in fourteen chapters, called the *Amrit Dhār*. *Rai Dhār* was the *chamār* disciple of Rāmānanda, and attained great celebrity as a devotee. More than

thirty of his hymns have been preserved in the *Ādi Granth*. The following, in which he describes his relation to God, is a specimen:

If Thou art a hill, then I am Thy peacock;  
 If Thou art the moon, then I am Thy shadow;  
 O God, if Thou break not with me, I will not break with Thee;  
 If I break with Thee, whom shall I join?  
 If Thou art a lamp, then I am Thy wick;  
 If Thou art a place of pilgrimage, then I am Thy pilgrim.  
 I have joined true love with Thee;  
 Joining Thee I have broken with all others.  
 Wherever I go there is Thy service;  
 There is no other Lord like Thee, O God.  
 By worshipping Thee Death's noose is cut away.  
 Rai Dās singeth to obtain Thy service.<sup>1</sup>

**Kabir.**—The greatest of the disciples of Rāmānanda, whether as a poet or a religious leader, was the Muhammadan weaver Kabir (1440-1518). According to legend he was really the son of a Brahman widow, who, in order to conceal her shame, exposed the infant in the Lahir Tank near Benares, where it was discovered by Nirū, the Muhammadan weaver, and his wife Nimā, and brought up by them as their own child. Another version gives an entirely miraculous account of his birth. Even as a boy he is said to have given offence both to Hindus and Muhammadans. The former he angered by putting on a sacred cord though of low caste, and the latter by using Hindu names for God though he was a Muhammadan. He was taunted also with being a *nigura*, that is one without a *guru*. Desiring to remove this reproach he wished to become a disciple of Rāmānanda, but feared that he might not be accepted. He therefore had recourse to a stratagem. Lying down upon the steps of the *ghaṭ* which he knew Rāmānanda visited, he hoped that in the dark the *guru* might stumble over him, and that probably then no words would rise so readily to his lips as the *mantra* of his order. This hope was realised and Rāmānanda uttered the words 'Rām, Rām.' Kabir claimed that he had been initiated and Rāmānanda admitted the claim. After this initiation Kabir is said to have visited his *guru* regularly, but though a disciple of Rāmānanda he went far beyond his

<sup>1</sup> Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion*, Vol. VI, p. 331.

master in his teaching. Whether he was originally a Muhammadan or not, there is no doubt that Muhammadan influence can be traced in his ideas. He was the founder of the deistic movement in India. He uses the name *Rama* for God (as well as other names such as *Hari*, *Govind*, *Allah*, etc.) and has Vedantic ideas, but he rejected entirely the doctrine of incarnations, and with no unsparing voice condemned idolatry and most of the Hindu ceremonies and rites. The influence of Kabir, both direct and indirect, has been enormous. Not only is the sect of Kabirpanthis, which claims him as its founder, still very numerous, but many other sects owe to him the leading ideas of their theology. Many of these sects will be mentioned later on in connection with the literature which their leaders produced. There are many legends but not very much reliable information about the life of Kabir. His interest in religious questions to the neglect of his weaving seems to have brought him sometimes into conflict with his family, but even more trouble came to him from the opposition of both Hindus and Muhammadans, who were offended in turn at his denunciation of many of their practices. He seems to have been persecuted by the Emperor Sikandar Lodi, after being denounced by both Hindus and Muhammadans as a troublesome person, and finally was exiled from Benares by the Emperor's orders. He went to live at Maghar in the Gorakhpur district, where he ended his days.

The poems composed by Kabir are very numerous. It is probable that he himself did not commit them to writing, but that they were remembered and treasured up by his disciples. Various collections of poems ascribed to Kabir have come down to us, but there is a strong probability that there is much in these collections that is not his genuine work. One collection is to be found in the *Adi Granth* of the Sikhs, which was compiled in 1604. Another collection is contained in the *Bijak* (literally 'invoice,' or 'account-book,' or perhaps 'a document by which a hidden treasure can be located'). This work was produced in connection with the Kabir Panth after the death of Kabir, probably as a book of instruction. It is often said to have been compiled by Bhago Das, one of Kabir's immediate disciples, about the year 1570. The *Bijak*

is a collection of verses in various metres. The *Ramainis* are short doctrinal poems. The *Sabdar* are similar, but in a different metre. The *Chavandā* is an exposition of the religious signification of the consonants of the Nāgarī alphabet. In the thirty verses of the *Vipramatī* an attack is made on the orthodox system of the Brahmins. The *Kaharūs*, *Vasantas*, *Bolīs*, *Chāncharīs*, *Hirkālīs* and *Hingolīs* are religious verses in the metres so named. The collection ends with over four hundred *Sākhīs*, or short apophthegms, each consisting of a single *dohā*, and the *Sāyar Bijak Ko Pad*, which sums up the whole matter. Neither the verses contained in the *Adi Granth* nor those in the *Bijak* can be regarded in their entirety as the work of Kabir. Besides these there are a very large number of *Sākhīs* (of which over five thousand have been collected) and other verses ascribed to Kabir which are still current in India. At the Kabir Chaurā, which is the headquarters of the Kabir Panth at Benares, there is said to be a collection of the works of Kabir, called the *Khālī Granth*, which includes about twenty different books. Many of these are evidently the works of disciples or successors, though few of them have been published. The dialect used in the compositions contained in the *Bijak* is the old Avadhī dialect of Hindi. The poetry of Kabir is rough and unpolished, and the style and language make it not always easy to understand. Words are often loosely strung together with very little regard to grammatical accuracy, and the sentences are often elliptical and full of colloquialisms. The frequent play on words and the obscurity of many of the similes used increase the difficulty. But in spite of all this Kabir must be given a very high place in Hindi literature. The amazing boldness with which he attacked the religious practices of his day, tolerating no shams and demanding reality in all those who were seeking after God, and the moral earnestness of his appeal to men to put the things of God first, would in itself give his work an outstanding importance. But besides this, the stinging satire which he has at his command, and his ability to produce striking epigrams, and the fascinating rhythm of his verse, all combine to give a wonderful power to his poetry. He has been called the pioneer of Hindi literature and the father of all Hindi hymns; but

though, in view of the predecessors we have already mentioned, such a claim can hardly be allowed, it is certainly true to say that it was he, more than any others before him, who popularized Hindi religious literature and vastly extended its influence, and Hindi literature of the same type subsequent to Kabir owes to him a great debt.

Translations of his poems give very little idea of the charm and force of his style, but a few extracts may help to give some idea of the kind of literature he produced. Here are one or two of the *Sūktis* ascribed to him:

Everything is from God and nothing from His servant;  
He can change a mustard-seed into a mountain and a mountain  
into a mustard-seed.

The house of God is distant, as is a tall palm;  
He who climbs to the top tastes of heaven; he who falls is  
ground in pieces.

Consider the parable of the sieve; it sifts the flour to pass, but  
retains the husk;  
So men let pass what is good and swallow what is useless.<sup>1</sup>

The lines below illustrate Kabir's theological standpoint:

If God be within the mosque, then to whom does this world  
belong?

If Rām be within the image which you find upon your pilgrimage,  
then who is there to know what happens without?

Hari is in the East; Allah is in the West. Look within your  
heart, for there you will find both Hari and Rām;

All the men and women of the world are His living forms.

Kabir is the child of Allah and of Rām: He is my guru, He is  
my Pi.<sup>2</sup>

One more extract will illustrate the poetical merit of Kabir's verse:

No one knew the mystery of that weaver: who came into the  
world and spread the warp.

The earth and sky are the two beams: the sun and moon are two  
filled shuttles.

Taking a thousand threads he spreads them lengthways: today  
he weaveth still, but hard to reach is the far-off end.

Says Kabir, joining Karma with Karma, woven with unwoven  
threads, splendidly the weaver weaves.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Translations from Westcott's *Kabir and the Kabir Poets*, pp. 86, 93, 95.

<sup>2</sup> Translation by Sir Rabindranath Tagore, *Kabir's Poems*, 69.

<sup>3</sup> *Bijak*, Ramaini, 28 (Rev. Ahmad Shāh's translation).



The son of Kabir, named *Kamāl*, is also said to have been a poet, and his complets to have been made in refutation of the sayings of his father, whom he seems to have opposed. Hence arose the proverb, 'An unlucky family was Kabir's, in which the son *Kamāl* was born.'

**Nānak.**—Of the many movements which owe their inspiration to the teaching of Kabir none is more important than the religion of the Sikhs, which was founded in the Punjab by Nānak (1469–1538). It is said that Nānak, when twenty-seven years of age, met Kabir, and the influence of the latter is seen not only in the large number of Kabir's compositions afterwards included in the *Sikh Granth*, but in the doctrines of Nānak, which are very similar to those of Kabir, and undoubtedly owe a great deal to him, though Nānak stands nearer to Hinduism than Kabir. Nānak made journeys in several directions accompanied by his disciple Mardana, who played the *rebeck* while Nānak sang. His hymns and other poetical utterances were in a mixture of Punjabi and Hindi. Although he is not equal to Kabir as a poet, yet his verse is clear and pithy, and not lacking in poetical excellence. Nānak soon gathered a number of followers and one of his most famous compositions is the *Jappi*, a collection of verses which he arranged for their daily use in praise and prayer. Besides this he composed a very large number of other verses which are included in the *Sikh Granth*. The following is one verse from the *Jappi*:

There is no limit to God's praises; to those who repeat them  
there is no limit.

There is no limit to His mercy, and to His gifts there is no  
limit.

There is no limit to what God seeth, no limit to what He  
heareth.

The limit of the secret of His heart cannot be known.

The limit of His creation cannot be known; neither His near nor  
His far side can be discovered.

To know His limits how many vex their hearts.

His limits cannot be ascertained;

Nobody knoweth His limits.

The more we say, the more there remains to be said.

Great is the Lord, and exalted is His seat.

His exalted name is higher than the most exalted.

Were any one else ever so exalted.

Then He would know that exalted Being:

How great He is He knoweth Himself.

Nānak, God bestoweth gifts on whom He looketh with favour and mercy.<sup>1</sup>

**The Krishna Cult.**—The followers of Rāmānanda, as well as those of Kabīr and Nānak, generally gave the name of Rāma to the Supreme God, though other names were sometimes used. The followers of Rāmānanda accepted Rāma as an incarnation, and permitted idolatry, but the doctrine of incarnation and the use of images were both rejected by Kabīr and Nānak. It was indeed still *bhakti* to Rāma which they preached, but to Rāma as the invisible God, not as an incarnation. There was, however, another group of Vaishnavas who worshipped God under the form of another incarnation, namely Krishna. Like the Rāmāite cult the worship of Krishna also had its beginnings in the centuries before this period, but about this time received a new impetus, which was marked, as well as furthered, by the use of the vernacular for its religious literature. Sometimes it was the child Krishna who was especially thought of as an object of worship, but more often it was that aspect of Krishna's life which was concerned with his relation to Rādhā and the other Gopis that received most attention.

Rādhā-Krishnaite verse goes back to the Sanskrit *Gītā Govinda* of Jayadeva in the twelfth century, and as early as the fourteenth century Krishna hymns appeared in Bengali. Between 1450 and 1480 there flourished a Gujarāṭī poet named *Narsingh Muktā* who wrote Rādhā-Krishna lyrics in that language. He is also credited with having composed similar verses in Hindi.

*Vidyapati Thākur*, who lived at Banpi, in the Darbhanga district of Biḥār, in the middle of the fifteenth century, is one of the most famous Vaishnava poets of Eastern India. He was the founder of a school of master-singers which afterwards spread all over Bengal. Little is known of his life, but he was the author of several Sanskrit works. His chief fame, however, rests on his sonnets in the Maithilī dialect of Biḥārī. In these he uses the story of the love which Rādhā bore to Krishna as an allegory to describe the relation of the soul to

<sup>1</sup> *Jappi*, XXIV; translation by Macmillan, *The Sikh Religion*, Vol. I, 208.

God. Many of these were afterwards adapted to Bengali and made popular by Chaitanya, and Vidyapati has had many imitators. His poems possess great literary merit and he has had a great influence on the literature of the Eastern part of India.

*Uśāpati* was probably a contemporary of Vidyapati, and also wrote Kṛishṇaite songs both in Maithili and in Bengali.

*Mirā Bai*.—About the same time as Vidyapati, or perhaps a little later, there flourished in the west of Hindūstān a writer whose poems helped to popularize the Kṛishṇa cult in that region. This was *Mirā Bai* (fl. 1470), the most famous of Hindi poetesses. There has been a great deal of confusion as to her date and the details of her life. But it seems that she was a princess of Rājputana who was married to Bhojrāj, the heir-apparent of Kumbha, Mahārājā of Mewār. Her husband died before he came to the throne, and Kumbha was put to death by another son, Ūḍekaran (or Ūḍa), who seized the throne in 1469. *Mirā Bai*, who was a devotee of Kṛishṇa even from her childhood, seems already to have given offence to the family of her husband by her refusal to conform to their particular form of Hindu worship, and her frequent lavish expenditure in the entertainment of *sādhus*, and when her brother-in-law Ūḍekaran had gained the throne, he persecuted her so much that she fled from Chitor and became a disciple of Rāi Dās, the *chamār* disciple of Rāmānanda. This must have been about the year 1470. She is said to have been especially devoted to that form of Kṛishṇa known as Ranchhor, and a legend says that one day, while worshipping with great devotion, she was taken up into the image and disappeared. Rāi Dās, as a follower of Rāmānanda, was a worshipper of Rāma, and it is not clear why *Mirā Bai* chose him as her *guru*, or whether Rāi Dās in any way modified her views, but he is mentioned two or three times in the poems ascribed to her. The lyrics of *Mirā Bai* are occupied with intense devotion to Kṛishṇa, though in some of them she uses the name of Rāma also for God. They are written in the Braj Bhāshā dialect and are graceful and melodious verses. There are many similar lyrics in Gujarātī which are also ascribed to *Mirā Bai*. The following is the translation of one of her lyrics:

God (i.e. Krishna) hath entwined my soul, O Mother,  
 With His attributes, and I have sung of them.  
 The sharp arrow of His love hath pierced my body through and  
 through, O Mother.  
 When it struck me I knew it not; now it cannot be endured, O  
 Mother.  
 Though I use charms, incantations and drugs, the pain will not  
 depart.  
 Is there any one who will treat me? Intense is the agony, O  
 Mother.  
 Thou, O God, art near; Thou art not distant; come quickly to  
 meet me.  
 Saith Mithi, the Lord, the mountain-walker, who is compas-  
 sionate, hath quenched the fire of my body, O Mother.  
 The Luna-eyed hath entwined my soul with the twine of His  
 attributes.<sup>1</sup>

**Vallabhacharya.**—The spread of the worship of Krishna, however, owed most to Vallabhacharya. He was the son of a Brahman from South India and was born at Benares in 1479. He established an image of Krishna at Gohardhan in the Braj country, and from this as his headquarters spread the doctrine of his sect in many parts of India. He wrote many works in Sanskrit, but nothing in Hindi, though the movement he initiated has produced many Hindi writers. He died in 1531 and was succeeded as leader of the sect by his son Vitthalnāth.

**Vitthalnāth**, who lived from about 1515 to 1585, not only became the leader of the sect which his father had founded but is also credited with having been a Hindi writer. Besides Hindi verses the genuineness of which is doubtful, he is also said to have been the author of a short prose work called *Maṅgal* dealing with the story of Rādhā and Krishna, which must be one of the earliest extant prose writings in Hindi. It is written in Braj Bhāṣā. Four of the disciples of his father Vallabhacharya, together with four of his own disciples became the celebrated *Aṣṭa Chhāp*, who are mentioned in a later chapter.

**Divisions of the Bhakti Movement.**—During this period (1400-1550) the various bhakti movements of Hinduism fall into three groups, namely (1) those who worshipped Rāma as

<sup>1</sup> Translation by Macauliffe, *The Religion of the Sikhs*, Vol. VI, 356.

an incarnation and practised idolatry; (2) those who worshipped God under the name of Rāma, but rejected idolatry and the doctrine of incarnation; and (3) those who worshipped Kṛiṣṇa. In each group during this period Hindi literature came to be used and was one of the great factors which helped to spread the various movements, while they, on the other hand, helped to stimulate the growth of Hindi literature. Almost the whole of subsequent Hindi literature is impressed with one or another of these forms of Vaiṣṇava doctrine.

**Malik Muhammad Jayasi.**—The bardic chronicles had a much more local currency than the religious verse described above, and outside Rājputān contributed little to the development of vernacular literature, but one remarkable poem of this period seems to show how even the poetry of the bards had been affected by the religious revival. This was the *Padmāvatī* of Malik Muhammad Jayasī, who flourished about 1540. Malik Muhammad was a Muhammadan devotee, but was acquainted with Hindu lore, and profoundly affected by the teaching of Kāṭh. He was much honoured by the Rāja of Amethi, who attributed the birth of a son to the prayers of the saint, and his tomb is still to be seen at Amethi. Besides the *Padmāvatī*, he wrote also a religious poem called the *Akhar-nāst*. In the *Padmāvatī* he tells the story of a certain Ratan Sen, who, hearing from a parrot of the great beauty of Padmāvatī, or Padminī, journeyed to Ceylon as a mendicant and returned to Chitor with Padminī as his bride. Alā-ud-dīn, the ruling sovereign at Delhi, also heard of Padminī, and endeavoured to capture Chitor in order to gain possession of her. He was unsuccessful, but Ratan Sen was taken prisoner and held as a hostage for her surrender. He was afterwards released from captivity by the bravery of two heroes. He then attacked King Dev Pāl, who had made insulting proposals to Padminī during his imprisonment. Dev Pāl was killed, but Ratan Sen, who was mortally wounded, returned to Chitor only to die. His two wives, Padminī and another, became *sati* for him, and while this was happening Alā-ud-dīn appeared at the gates of Chitor, and, though it was bravely defended, captured it. At the end of the poem Malik Muhammad explains it all as being an allegory. Chitor

is the body of man, Ratan Sen is the soul, Padmini is wisdom, Alā-ud-dīn is delusion, the parrot is the guru, and so on, and thus a religious character is given to the story. Malik Muhammad's poem is based on the facts connected with the actual siege of Chitor, which took place in 1503, but he has considerably modified the details and borrowed also from other stories. The poem is written in the vernacular dialect of Malik Muhammad's time, tinged slightly with an admixture of Persian words and idioms. It was originally written in the Persian character. It is a work of great originality and poetic beauty, and must be reckoned as one of the masterpieces of Hindi literature.

The following translation of an extract from Malik Muhammad's description of Ceylon will give some idea of his excellence as a poet:

When a man approacheth this land, 'tis as though he approacheth Kailāsa, the mount of heaven. Dense mango-groves lie on every side, rising from the earth to the very sky. Each tall tree exhaleth the colours of mount Malaya, and the shade covereth the world as though it were the night. The shade is pleasant with its Malaya breeze; 'tis in the fiery mouth of Jyōtish [May-June] 'tis cool as midn. It is as though night cometh from that shade and as though from it cometh the greenness of the sky. When the wayfarer cometh thither suffering from the heat he forgetteth his trouble in his blissful rest, and whom hath found this perfect shade, returneth ne'er again to bear the sun-rays.

So many and so dense are these groves, that I cannot tell their end. The whole six seasons of the year do they flower and fruit, as though it were always spring.

The pleasant thick mango-groves bear fruit, and the more fruit they bear, the more (humbly) do the trees bow their heads. On the main branches and trunks of the jack trees, the jack fruit ripen, and fair appeareth the boyal to him who looketh. The *Amra* ripeneth sweet as molasses, and the black wild plum, like black bees (among its leaves). Coconuts ripen and ripeneth the *āyaskas*; they ripen as though the orchards were in Indra's heaven. From the *malua* doth such sweetness exude, that honey is its flavour, and flowers its scent; and in these princes' gardens are other good fruits, good to eat, whose names I knew not. They all appear with nectar-like branches, and he who once tasteth them remaineth ever longing for more.

Areca and nutmeg, all fruits, are produced there luxuriantly. On every side are thick groves of tamarinds, of palmyras, and of date-palms.

There dwell the birds, singing in many tongues, and sporting joyfully as they look upon these nectar-branches. As down the honey-suckers are fragrant, and the turtle-dove cries out, "Tis thou and only thou" (*eko-i nī ai*). The emerald paroquets sportively

rejoice, and the rock-pigeons cry *larkar* and fly about. The hawk-cuckoo crieth for its beloved, and the skulking warbler shouted *rāhi āhi*. *Kahū kahū* ever crieth the cuckoo, while the king-crow speaketh in many tongues. 'Tyre, tyre' [*daki, daki*] crieth the milkmaid-bird, while the green pigeon plaintively telleth its tale of woe. The peacock's cry *kūn kūn* sounded sweet to the ear, and loudly saw the cross.

Filling the orchards, smeth every bird that hath a name, and each praiseeth the Creator in his own tongue.<sup>1</sup>

**Other Poets of this Period.**—Two other poets of this period may also be mentioned—*Narottam Dās* (fl. 1530) wrote the *Sudāmā Charit* and the *Dhruv Charit*. These works are stories in verse. He was also the author of detached poems.

*Kṛpā Rūp* (fl. 1540) was the author of a work, entitled *Hit Taranginī*, written in Braj Bhāṣā. Its importance lies in its being the earliest extant work in Hindi dealing with the art of poetry, and it shows how the way was being prepared for the work of Keśav Dās.

<sup>1</sup> *Padmaavatī*, Canto II, 27-29; translation by Sir George A. Grierson and Pandit Sudhakar Dwivedi, in *Bibliotheca Indica* of Asiatic Society of Bengal, New Series, No. 877, Vol. I, 15, 16.

## THE MUGHAL COURT AND THE ARTISTIC INFLUENCE IN HINDI LITERATURE

(1556-1605)

**The New Influence in Hindi Poetry.**—Although the religious language of the Muhammadans was Arabic, the literary language they used in India, and the language of the court, was Persian. This language possessed a large literature, which had already developed a highly artistic character before the Muhammadan power was established in India. Many Hindus who were connected with the court came to learn this language, and when Urdu literature developed it was fashioned after Persian models. Though Hindi developed on its own lines, without any direct influence from Persian, it seems not unlikely that the polished Persian verse with which many Hindus became acquainted may have suggested a higher artistic standard in Hindi literature than there had been before. At all events, about the middle of the sixteenth century there appeared a new artistic influence in Hindi literature, which was developed under encouragement from the Mughal court.

Previous Muhammadan rulers had encouraged literature, but it was Akbar who first extended patronage to those who wrote in Hindi. The reign of Akbar (1556-1605) was marked by its brilliance and splendour. Not only was he successful in war and in establishing a strong and, on the whole, good government, but he was also a great patron of art and literature. Architecture, music, painting and calligraphy were all encouraged. The emperor established a large library of books of various languages, and had translations made from Sanskrit into Persian and the vernacular. Poets were



patronized and rewarded with great liberality. The magnificence of such a reign, like the glorious reign of Queen Elizabeth in England which was contemporary with it, could not but exercise a stimulating influence on all sides, and this was felt in Hindi literature as well as in other directions. Even those writers who lived far away from the influence of the court were helped by feeling that they could carry on their labours in peace under a government strong enough to secure good order, and tolerant towards Hindus as well as Muhammadans. Akbar pursued a deliberate policy of protection and encouragement of Hindu learning. The patronage extended by him, and others in high position, to Hindu as well as to Muhammadan writers, stimulated a great outburst of literary activity, and encouraged improvement in the standards of poetic art. The influence was of course felt most by those writers who lived in close touch with the court.

**Poets at Akbar's Court.**—Akbar himself is the reputed author of a few detached verses in Hindi, in which he signs himself Akahbar Rāy. They were probably composed in the emperor's name by the court musician, Tān Sen. Some of Akbar's great ministers of state were also authors. It was largely due to the influence of Rājā Todar Mal (1523-1589) in making Hindus learn Persian that Urdu was developed and accepted as a language. Besides translating the *Bhāgavata Purāna* into Persian, Todar Mal was the author of some Hindi verses, the best being on morals (*nīti*). Rājā Birbal (1528-1583) was a Kansaṃ Dube Brahman, and was at first a poet at the court of the Rājā of Jaipur. The latter sent him to the court of Akbar, where his ability soon brought him into favour. He was not only skilled in business so that he soon rose to a high position, but also possessed great musical and poetical talent. Akbar gave him the title of *Karī Rāy* (poet-laureate) and he received rapid promotion. He was famous as a poet for his short verses of a witty and humorous character. No complete work by him has survived, but many verses ascribed to him are still current. When he reached a high position he himself became a patron of other poets. Rājā Manohar Dās (fl. 1577), another of Akbar's courtiers, was also a poet. Mahārāja Mān Singh (1535-1618) of Jaipur, one of Akbar's generals, was a great patron of literary men,

and is reputed to have given as much as a lakh of rupees for a single verse. *Abul Faiz* (or *Faizi*) was brother of *Abul Fazl*, who wrote the *Ain-i-Akbari*. Both were friends of Akbar. *Abul Faiz* was not only a Persian poet but the author of many Hindi couplets.

The most skilled Hindi poet amongst Akbar's great ministers of state was *Abdul Rahim Khānkhānā* (1553-1627). He was the son of *Bairām Khān*, through whose aid Akbar, in his youth, had been established on the throne. He was acquainted with Arabic, Persian, Sanskrit and Hindi, and besides being a poet himself was a great patron of poets, especially of *Gauṅ Kavi*. His Hindi verses, especially those on morals (*uṭī*) are very much admired, and he was a poet of a high order. Amongst the several works he produced is the *Rahīm Sat Sat*, in which some of his best poetry is found.

*Tān Sen* (fl. 1560-1610) of Gwalior, a Hindu convert to Islam, was the most celebrated musician at Akbar's court and indeed of his age. After service at other courts he was summoned by Akbar in 1563, and the first time he performed Akbar is said to have given him two lakhs of rupees. Besides being a singer he also wrote poems in Hindi. He lived on into the reign of *Jahāngir*. Amongst his compositions are the *Sargit Sar* and the *Rāg Mālā*. *Rām Dās* of Gopchal, the father of the great poet *Sūr Dās*, was another great singer of Akbar's court, regarded as second only to *Tān Sen*. Among other Hindi poets who attended Akbar's court were the two friends, *Karnes* (or *Karus*) and *Narhari Sahāy*. The latter was given by Akbar the title of *Mahāpātr*, the emperor saying that other bards were vessels of virtue (*Guṇ kṣāpātr*), but that *Narhari Sahāy* was a great vessel (*Mahāpātr*).

A more famous poet connected with Akbar's court was *Gauṅa Prasaḍ*, who is more commonly known as *Gauṅ Kavi*. He lived probably from about 1533 to 1617. Very little is known of his life, and though he was very much honoured in his day only about thirty or thirty-five of his verses are still extant. On one occasion *Abdul Rahim Khānkhānā*, who was his special patron, is reported to have given him as much as thirty-six lakhs of rupees for a single verse. He is said to have excelled in the comic style and also in his description of battles.

**The Art of Poetry.**—Besides the many poets who were closely connected with the court, the reign of Akbar was the period when such great poets as Tulsi Dās and Sūr Dās flourished. These will be dealt with in later chapters in connection with the religious movements with which they were connected. But more closely in touch with the court was a movement to systematize the art of poetry itself. While great writers like Tulsi Dās and Sūr Dās were far beyond their contemporaries in the success they achieved in the handling of metres and the polish of their verse, earlier poets had often failed in this respect. But the artistic influence which had been brought to bear on Hindi poetry now became self-conscious in various works, themselves in verse, which determined the canons of poetic criticism.

**Kesav Das.**—Kṛpā Rām, who is mentioned in a previous chapter, was probably the forerunner of this movement, but the first great writer on the art of poetry was *Kesav Dās Sandaḍhya Mītra* (1555-1617) of Orchhā in Bundelkhand. His first important work was the *Vijayā Gūṇ*, which he dedicated to his patron Rājā Madhukar Shāh of Orchhā. His most admired work is his *Kaṇṇ Prīyā*, in which he describes the various literary qualities which should mark a good poem and other matters connected with the art of poetry. This work, which has made Kesav Dās an authority on poetry, was dedicated to a famous courtesan of those days, named *Pravin Rāy Pātari*, who was also the authoress of numerous short poems which have a great reputation. The *Rām Chandrikā* of Kesav Dās was inscribed to Indrajit Singh, son of Madhukar Shāh. It was Kesav Dās who, through Rājā Birbal's instrumentality, got Akbar to excuse Indrajit from a heavy fine he had imposed upon him, and Kesav Dās was greatly honoured by Indrajit. Kesav also wrote the learned *Rasik Prīyā* on poetical composition (*uṣṭi*) and the *Rām Alankṛitmanjari* on prosody. These works on poetry and kindred subjects were not only concerned with giving rules, but also provided original illustrations, so that each work is also a collection of verse of great poetic merit. The poetry of Kesav Dās is not easy reading, but there is no doubt of his being a poet of very great skill, and his name is to be reckoned amongst the foremost. Very many commentaries

on his principal works have been written, and he has had many imitators. The translation of a few of his lines, which is all that we have space for here, can give only a very inadequate idea of his poetry:

Kesav says my [grey] hairs have done to me what my enemies cannot do;

Maidens with a countenance fair as the moon, and eyes like deer,  
now call me Bihā [father].

Do not employ a Brahman who is greedy of fees; do not make  
a fool your friend;

Do not serve an ungrateful master; do not praise poetry that is  
full of defects.

Kesav says, When I see glancing eyes my good resolutions go,  
and the opinion of the world is no longer heeded;

My ears become deaf to instruction; and my eyes closed to all  
discernment of right and wrong;

The chariot-like motion of the good intentions of my mind  
becomes stopped like a river that has ceased to flow.

May the Creator forbid that such a woman should fix her eyes  
on me.

Avoid a horse with an uneasy gait, a servant who is a thief, a  
mind which is fickle, a friend without intelligence, a master  
who is a miser.

Taking food in another's house, dwelling in dog-kennels, travel-  
ling in the rainy season—these things, says Kesav Dās, give a  
lot of trouble.

Keeping company with sinners, a woman under the control of  
Cupid, a son of ill-fame—these are hurtful to the mind.

Folly, old age, sickness, poverty, falsehood, anxiety—these things,  
says Kesav, are a hell upon earth.

**Some Contemporaries of Kesav Dās.**—The brother of Kesav Dās, whose name was *Balbhadrā Saṁdhyā Mitra*, wrote several works which include a commentary on the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*. His most famous poem is a *Nakṣhikā*, which is recognized as a standard work. This is a form of literature which is common amongst Hindi writers, and is closely connected with works on the art of poetry. In a *Nakṣhikā* every part of the body of a hero or heroine from the toe-nail (*nakṣ*) to the top-knot of the hair (*ikā*) is described with illustrative verses. Such a work was intended to be used by other poets in want of ideas. A similar kind of work is a

work on lovers, or a *Nāyab-Nāyikā Bhāṣā*, in which various kinds of heroes and heroines are described and classified with a minuteness which is often pedantic and absurd. Other writers on the art of poetry of this period were *Rāī Kṛishṇa Tripāthī* (fl. 1600) and *Kaśī Nāth* (fl. 1600), the former of whom wrote a good prose-essay called *Ras Chandrikā*.

**Artistic Poets of the time of Jahangir and Shah Jahan.**—The effects of the encouragement given to Hindi literature by Akbar lasted long after his death. Jahāngir (1605-1627) and Shah Jahan (1627-1658) very largely continued Akbar's policy of encouraging poets. Dārā Shukoh, the son of Shah Jahan, was a great patron of learning and literature with a strong leaning towards Hinduism. Even in the time of Aurangzeb (1658-1707), although he was unfavourable to Hindu learning, the title of *Kavī Rāj* continued to be given to deserving poets.

*Sundar* (fl. 1631) was a Brahman who held the title of *Kavī Rāj* at the court of Shah Jahan. He wrote a work on poetical composition called *Sundar Sāhitya*, and was also the author of a Braj Bhāṣā version of the *Singhāvan Battā*, which was afterwards translated into Urdu by Lallū Ji Lāl.

*Senapati* was born about 1589 and died after 1649. He was a Kanaujī Brahman and a devotee of Kṛishṇa. His principal work was the *Kavīta Ratnākar*, which is dated 1649, and deals with various aspects of the art of poetry as well as other matters. He excelled in his description of nature, and is especially famous for his description of the six seasons, in which he is considered to have excelled all Hindi poets with the exception of Dev Dutt. Another work of his is the *Kāvya Kalpadrum*. His poems were probably written as detached verses and collected afterwards. The following is from his description of spring (*Varaṇṣ*):

During the sportive spring the *palāś* trees are in full bloom, with red flowers, parts of which however appear from their blackness to have been dipped in ink. Swarms of bees are going to them to gather honey. The mild south wind is blowing fragrance in the gardens and forests. The poet Senapati says, 'In the spring, by constantly looking at these flowers the idea of writing poetry has been strongly brought to my mind.' The red glow of the upper part of the flowers clearly portrays the burning desire and yearning of a lover, while the blackness of the lower part, like a fire burnt out completely and turned to charcoal, suggests the pangs of separation.

**The Tripathi Brothers.**—Ratnākar Tripathī was a Kanauji Brahman who lived at Tāvāmpur in the district of Cawnpore and had four sons, all of whom became famous Hindi poets. They flourished in the reigns of Shāh Jahān and Aurangzeb, in the latter half of the seventeenth century, and amplified and developed the work of Keśav Dās. The eldest was *Chintāmani Tripathī*, who was patronised by several rulers as well as by the Emperor Shāh Jahān. He is regarded as one of the great authorities on the subject of poetical composition (*śāhitya*). Among his works are *Chhand Bichār*, a treatise on prosody, *Kāvyā Vivēk*, *Kecī-kul Kalpataru*, and *Kāvyā Prakāś*. He was also the author of a *Rāmāyana* in *karṇāṭa* and other metres. The name of the youngest brother was Jai Śankar or *Nil Kanth Tripathī*. Both Chintāmani and Nil Kanth were excelled as poets by the other two brothers, Bhūshana and Mati Rāya.

*Bhūshana Tripathī* visited the courts of several kings, but his special patrons were Śiv Rāj (or Śivājī) of Sitāra and Chhatrasāl of Panā. On one occasion the latter monarch helped with his own shoulder to carry the poet's palanquin, and Śiv Rāj bestowed lavish rewards upon him, giving on one occasion five elephants and twenty-five thousand rupees for a single poem. The principal work of Bhūshana is the *Śiv Rāj Bhūshana*, which is an excellent account of rhetoric as used in poetry, and each figure of rhetoric is illustrated by a verse in honour of Śiv Rāj. It was composed between 1666 and 1673. Some of the works of Bhūshana have been lost. But besides the *Śiv Rāj Bhūshana* there are extant other verses in praise of Śiv Rāj and of Chhatrasāl. Bhūshana is considered to have excelled in the tragic, heroic, and terrible styles, and holds a very high rank amongst Hindi poets. He is especially famous for his keen interest in the progress and glory of the Hindus, and this is one of the features of his poetry which is very much admired. It was this interest which attracted him so much to Śivājī, the Marāṭhā hero, who did so much to weaken the Muhammadan power. Here is a translation of one of his verses:

As Indra subdued Jamblha, as the lotus fire overcomes the sea, as Rāmachandra overcame the hypocrite Rāvan, as the wind overpowers the waters, as Śaṁblha overcame Cupid, as Rāma, the Lord of Brah-

man, overcome Sahaya Hill, as fire overcomes the branches of a tree, as a leopard overcomes a herd of deer, as a lion overcomes elephants, as light overcomes darkness, as Krishna overcomes Kṛishṇa, so, Bhūshab says, the lion Śiv Rāj overcomes the Muhammadans.

*Matī Rām Tripāthī* lived first at the court of Mahārāja Rāv Bhāu Singh of Bāndī and afterwards at that of Rājā Sambhu Nāth Sulānki. In honour of his first patron he composed a work on rhetoric called *Lalī Lalām*. Among the illustrative verses are many in praise of his patron as well as love verses and others. His work is considered to give a very clear and easily understood account of the subject of rhetoric. It was composed about 1664. The *Chhand Sū Pīngal* is a treatise on prosody composed in honour of Sambhu Nāth. The *Ras Rāj* is a treatise on lovers containing a *Nāyikā Bhūd* and is considered to be a very excellent work. Matī Rām also composed the *Sat Sat Matī Rām*. As a poet he is famed for the purity and sweetness of his language, the excellence of his similes, and for his descriptions of the dispositions of men. Many of his *duhā* are considered equal to those of Bihārī Lal.

**Other Poets of the time of Shah Jahan.**—Rājā Sambhu Nāth Singh of Sīpārī (fl. 1650) was the friend and patron of Matī Rām and other poets. He was the author of a *Nāyikā Bhūd* and a *Nakṣhā* which are much admired. The latter is sometimes considered to be the best work of its kind extant.

*Saravati* (fl. 1650) was a Brahman of Benares, learned in Sanskrit composition. At the instance of Shah Jahan he took to writing poems in Hindi. His chief work of this kind was the *Kavindrā Kalpa Lūtā*, in which there are many poems in praise of his patron as well as of Prince Dārā Shukoh and the Begam Sahibā.

*Tulā* (fl. 1655) was only a mediocre poet himself, but in 1655 he compiled an excellent anthology of poetry, called the *Kavī Mālā*, which includes poems by seventy-five different authors from 1443 to 1643.

Another writer of this period was *Vedāng Rāj* (fl. circ. 1650). He was the author of the *Pārsī Prakhāṭ*, a work describing the manner of counting the months, etc., by Hindus and Muhammadans, which was compiled by the orders of the Emperor Shāh Jahan.

**Bihārī Lal Chaudh.**—The most celebrated Hindi writer in

connection with the art of poetry is *Bihārī Lāl Chaube* (circ. 1603-1663). He is said to have been born in Gwahior and to have spent his boyhood in Bundelkhand. On his marriage he settled at Muttra, the home of the Braj Bhūslāl dialect, in which his verses are composed. His patron was Rājā Jai Singh of Jaipur, who gave him a gold *ankrafi* for each *dohā*. Bihārī Lāl's fame as a poet rests upon his *Sat Sai* (1662), which is a collection of approximately seven hundred *dohās* and *surathās*. The majority of the couplets take the shape of amorous utterances of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, but each couplet is complete in itself. They are intended to illustrate figures of rhetoric and other constituents of a poem. As the verses do not connect themselves into a story the order of their arrangement can be changed and they have come down in different recensions. The most famous is that made for Prince Azam Shāh, the third son of the Emperor Aurangzeb, and hence called the Azam Shāhi recension. A brief description of this work will help to indicate the nature of Hindi works on poetics. The vast amount of literature of this type seems to indicate that in India the dictum that a poet is born and not made would have to be reversed. In the Azam Shāhi recension there are first a few miscellaneous verses. Then there are verses applicable to each of four kinds of hero (*nāyak*), followed by nearly two hundred verses which describe the varieties and sub-varieties of heroine (*nāyikā*). Next there are verses illustrating the various constituents of poetic style (*ras*), its excitants and its essuants, among which verses about a hundred and seventy deal with the pangs of love in separation. The third section is a *Nakṣhikā*, and ends with verses descriptive of the six Indian seasons. In the fourth part there are moral apophthegms and allusive sayings and a collection of verses illustrating sentiments appropriate to various occasions. In the last part, besides the conclusion and other verses, there are verses illustrating the different styles (*ras*) of poetry, which are considered in India to be nine in number. These are *hāsya* (comic), *karuṇā* (pathetic), *raudra* (furious), *vīra* (heroic), *bhayanaka* (terrible), *bibhatsa* (disgustful), *adbhuta* (marvellous), *sānta* (quietistic), and *śṛīgāra* (erotic). Only the first eight are referred to in this part of the *Sat Sai*,



as the last (*triṅgura*) had already been dealt with at length in an earlier part of the recession.

Bihārī Lāl was not the originator of this form of composition. Similar works had appeared in Sanskrit, one of which is called *Sapta Sūtrī*, the Sanskrit equivalent of the Hindi *Sat Sai* ('seven centuries,' i.e. of verse). Tulsī Dās had written a *Sat Sai* before the time of Bihārī Lāl, as well as other Hindi poets. But Bihārī Lāl undoubtedly achieved very great excellence in this particular line, and his work has had a large number of commentators (as many as thirty in number) and many imitators. Hārī Prasad (d. c. 1775) of Benares translated the *Sat Sai* into Sanskrit. Each couplet had to be complete in itself, and yet in such a small space the poet must give an entire picture. Conciseness of style was therefore an absolute necessity, and besides this all the different artifices of Indian rhetoric had to be illustrated in turn. The work of Bihārī Lāl is a triumph of skill and of felicity in expression. He is perhaps at his best in his description of natural phenomena, as when he describes the scent-laden breeze under the guise of a way-worn pilgrim from the south. Naturally a work of this kind abounds in obscurities and on account of the peculiarity of its style is very difficult to translate. In the following verse Bihārī Lāl gives a riddle:

At even came the rogue, and with my treasure  
Tried with a sweet allure—'with us'er a "pleaser"  
Snatched a trade kiss—then wooed me with caresses.  
'Who was it, dear?' 'Thy love?' 'No, dear, the breeze.'

**Jaswant Singh.**—*Moharaja Jaswant Singh* of Jodhpur (Mārwar) figures in history as an opponent of Aurangzeb. He was born in 1625 and died in 1681. In 1634, while still a boy, he came to the throne. In literature his chief fame rests on his *Bhūshā Bhūshan*, a work on rhetoric in 261 *dohās*. This work, which was founded on a Sanskrit one, has had a large number of commentators. Though Keshav Dās was the first great Hindi writer on this subject he is considered heretical in some points, and for those who do not follow Keshav Dās, the *Bhūshā Bhūshan* is the great text-book. Jaswant

<sup>1</sup> Translation from *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, Vol. II, p. 423.

Singh was the author of several other poems which are connected with the Vedānta philosophy.

**Dev Kavi.**—*Dev Datt*, more commonly known as *Dev Kavi* (circ. 1673–1745) was a Śaṅkṛdhyā Brahman who was born at Etawah. At the age of sixteen he recited his first effort before Prince Āzam Shāh. In search of a patron he visited many places in India, but seems to have been dissatisfied with each in turn. His most famous patron was Rājā Bhogī Lal. His various wanderings enabled him to give accurate descriptions of the inhabitants of different parts of India. He was a prolific writer and is credited by some with having composed as many as seventy-two different works. Only about thirty of these are extant. They include a play called *Dev Māyā Prapañch* and works on the art of poetry. Amongst his most famous works are the *Jātīlīlās*, the *Rasbilās*, and the *Prem-chandrikā*. Most of his verse is of an erotic character, but from the point of view of form and language he is to be reckoned amongst the greatest Hindi poets. He wrote in Braj Bhāshā, and his verse is adorned with all the recognised ornaments of style. In his handling of rhymes, his use of attributes, his drawing of comparisons, his knowledge of the sayings current amongst men, and his description of heroines who represent women typical of various parts of India, he is considered to have shown the greatest skill.

Here are some translations of his verses:

Call me a wicked person, noble or ignoble, call me poor, or one who is to be blamed, call me a woman of ill-fame—whether in this world, the world of men, or in the best of worlds I dwell, nevertheless I am separate from all these worlds; whether my body is destroyed, or the gods and gurus are destroyed, or my life is destroyed, I will not give up my obsequy. He who dwells in Brindāvan, wearing a crown and yellow garments, with him I am madly in love.

\* \* \* \* \*

The work of a man of noble race, the gentility of a nobleman, the wealth of a generous man, a woman of good character, the honour of giving, generosity like that of Śrī Dās, the lustre of virtue, a woman who walks like an elephant, water in the hot weather, the sunshine of October, the smiling lightning accompanied by clouds during the month of November, the full moon, the morning sun, the days of the winter season, the nights of spring—Dev says these are most excellent.

**Later Writers on the Art of Poetry.**—The reign of Aurangzeb (1658-1707) was marked by the beginning of the decay of the Mughal Empire. It was also the time when a period of decadence in Hindi poetry set in. This, however, was not felt at first, as is shown by the names mentioned above. But towards the end of Aurangzeb's reign, and still more after his time in the eighteenth century, the decline becomes evident. While the number of poets still continues to be great there are no names of such outstanding importance as marked the time of Akbar and his immediate successors, and most of the writers are only imitators of greater poets who preceded them. The severe Aurangzeb was unfavourable to the arts and to Hindu learning, but the court patronage of poets was not entirely withdrawn, and many poets attended his court and also that of his son Bahādur Shāh (1707-1712). The following are some of the writers on the art of poetry and kindred subjects from the time of Aurangzeb down to the end of the eighteenth century:

*Kalpātī Mitrā* (born circ. 1620) was a Chaube Brahman of Agra and a nephew of Bihārī Lāl Chaube. He attended the court of Mahārāja Rām Singh of Jaipur. His chief work, which is dated 1670, is the *Rat Rahasya*, a work on poetics.

*Rām Ji* (born 1646) was the author of a *Nāyikā Itihāsa* as well as other works.

*Mandan* (born 1643), of Bundelkhānd, wrote several works on poetical composition.

*Sukh Dev Mitrā* (fl. circ. 1680), of Kampilā, attended several courts. The Rājā of Gaur gave him the title of *Kavirāj*. He wrote works on prosody, poetical composition and other subjects and is considered a poet of very great merit.

*Nemāj* (fl. circ. 1700) was a Brahman who lived at the Court of Rājā Chhatrasāl of Pannā. He was the author of a play called the *Sakuntalā Nāṭak* as well as of many detached verses.

*Kālidās Trivedī* (fl. circ. 1700), of Banpurā in the Doab, was for many years in attendance at the court of Aurangzeb, and afterwards at that of the Rājā of Jambū. He is considered to be an excellent poet. Among other works he compiled an

anthology, called *Kalidās Hajārā*, which contains a thousand poems selected from the works of over two hundred poets from 1423 to 1718.

*Ālam* (fl. 1703) was a Brahman who fell in love with a Muhammadan woman named Sheikh Rangrezin, who was a dyer by trade. He became a Muhammadan and married her. *Sheikh Rangrezin* also wrote poetry. Ālam was in the service of Muazzam Shāh, son of Aurangzeb. His poetry is considered to be very beautiful.

*Śatpati* (fl. 1720) is counted as one of the authorities on poetical composition. His most famous work is the *Kāya Saraj*. He wrote several other works also.

*Sūratī Mīra* (fl. 1729), of Agra, wrote a commentary on the *Sat Sai* of Bihārī Lal, and also one on the *Ram Prīya* of Kesav Dās. He also wrote works on rhetoric and other subjects, including a *Nakkhsh*.

*Ganjan* (fl. 1729), of Benares, was a Brahman who was in the service of Qasrullah Khān (the Vazīr of the Emperor Muhammad Shāh), who gave the poet liberal rewards. At the orders of his patron Ganjan wrote a work on poetics in which there are many verses in praise of the Vazīr. It is considered to be a work of great merit.

*Guru Datt Singh* (fl. 1734) was Rājā of Amethi. He wrote under the name of *Bhūpati*. His principal work was an excellent *Sat Sai* in imitation of that of Bihārī Lal.

*Took Nidhi* (fl. 1734) lived at Singraur, in the district of Allahabad. He wrote the *Sudhānidhi* and other works on poetics including a *Nakkhsh*, which are much admired.

*Dalpatī Rāy*, a merchant, and *Bensidhar*, a Brahman (fl. 1735), both of whom lived at Ahmedabad, wrote in collaboration the *Alankar Ratnākar*. It was inscribed to Rājā Jagat Singh, of Udaipur, and is a kind of commentary on the *Bhūshā Bhūshan* of Rājā Jaswant Singh.

*Somnāth* (fl. 1737) was a Brahman who was patronised by a son of the Rājā of Bharatpur. Among other works he wrote the *Prīyā Nidhi*, which is considered to be a standard work on the art of poetry.

*Ras Līn* (fl. 1740), whose real name was Sayyad Gulām Nabī, of Bilgrām, in the district of Hardoi, wrote several works on poetics which include a *Nakkhsh* called *Ang Darpan*.

*Uday Nāth Trivedī* (fl. 1740), of Banpurā, in the Doab, was the son of Kālidas Trivedī. He was the poet-laureate at the court of the Rājā of Ametlā, and wrote on the subject of poetics. His son *Dulak Trivedī* (fl. 1750) also wrote on the same subject.

*Bairī Sāl* (fl. 1768) wrote on the subject of rhetoric. His *Bhāṣā Bhaṣan* is considered to be a standard work of great excellence.

*Kishor* (fl. 1768) was an excellent poet whose various detached verses are collected in the *Kishor Saṅgrah*. He is considered to be very successful in his description of the six seasons.

*Datt or Dev Datt* (fl. circ. 1770) was the author of the *Lalitā Latā*, a work on rhetoric which is said to resemble the *Lalit Lalām* of Mātī Rām.

*Chundan Rāy* (fl. 1773) attended the court of the Rājā of Gaur. He wrote many esteemed works on the art of poetry. He had twelve pupils, all of whom became successful poets.

*Ratan Kaver* (born circ. 1741) wrote works on poetics which include the *Fateh Shāh Prabodh* and the *Fateh Bhāṣan*. He is considered to be a poet of great merit. His examples are mostly verses in praise of his patron Fateh Shāh of Bundelā.

*Manī Rām Mītra* (fl. 1772) has given, in the fifty-six verses of his *Chhand Chhappan*, a very concise and well-written account of the art of poetry. This poem, which somewhat resembles the Sanskrit Sūtra, is considered to be very excellent.

*Budhā Prasadbhāṣī* (fl. circ. 1773-1803) was connected with Pannā. He was the author of the *Ishqnamā* and some detached verses which are much admired. He was a poet of love, and his verses were written mostly in praise of a courtesan named Subhān.

*Jan Gopāl* (fl. 1776) was the author of the *Samarsār*, a work which is said to be full of poetic feeling.

*Devkī Nandan* (fl. 1784-1800) wrote the *Springār Charitr*, which is a *Nāyik-Nāyik Bhed*, and other much-praised works connected with the art of poetry.

*Thān Rām*, or *Thān* (fl. 1791), a Bhāt, was the author of a work on poetics called *Dulak Prakāś*.

*Beni* (fl. 1792-1817) wrote works on poetics, rhetoric, etc. His best verses are said to be verses of satire.

*Bhaer* (fl. 1794), a *Bhāt*, who was skilled in all the graces of poetry, wrote in Braj *Bhāshā* works connected with the poetic art.

*Bhikārī Dās* (fl. 1734-1750) was a Kayasth of Pratāpgarh, in Bundelkhand. He is more generally known by the name of *Dās*. His patron was Hindūpati, brother of Rājā Prithvipati. He borrowed phrases from other poets, especially from Sripati, but is considered nevertheless to be an excellent poet. Besides many works connected with the art of poetry he also translated the *Vākyan Parāṇa* into Hindi verse.

*Gumāl Mīra* (fl. 1744) attended the court of Akbar Ali Khān. He translated the *Nānakāva* of Śrī Harsha and wrote several works on poetics.

*Raghu Nāth* (fl. 1745), of Benares, was the father of Gokul Nāth, who is celebrated as the translator of the *Mahābhārata* into Hindi. Raghu Nāth was a writer on the art of poetry, his works being much admired. They include a commentary on the *Sat Sai* of Bihārī Lāl.

*Kumār Mañi Bhagat* (fl. 1746) was a very skilled poet, who wrote a good work on poetics called *Rasik Ratn*.

*Sambhu Nāth Mīra* (fl. 1749) attended the court of Bhagwant Rāj Khichī, Rājā of Asothar. He wrote several much-admired works on poetics and was the precursor of Śiv Arselā and other poets.

*Śiv Arselā* (fl. circ. 1750) wrote on poetical composition and prosody.

*Jagat Singh* (fl. circ. 1770) belonged to the family of the Rājā of Gopā and Bhingā and was a pupil of Śiv Arselā. He wrote on prosody and rhetoric.

*Thākur* (fl. circ. 1750) excelled especially in the *saraiya* metre, and his works are mostly in the erotic style. His most famous work is the *Thākur Satuk*. He also wrote a commentary on the *Sat Sai* of Bihārī Lāl.

*Harī Charan Dās* (fl. 1778) was a Brahman, of Kṛishnagarh (Mārwar). He wrote commentaries on the *Kavi Priyā* and *Rasik Priyā* of Kesav Dās, as well as on the *Sat Sai* of Bihārī Lāl, and was the author of other works also.

## VI

### TULSĪ DĀS AND THE RĀMA CULT

(1550-1600)

**Tulsī Dās.**—The most celebrated name in Hindi literature is undoubtedly that of *Tulsī Dās*, whose Hindi *Rāmāyag* has had great and deserved fame not only in India but throughout the whole world. The details of his life, apart from legends, are very scanty. He is said to have been born about 1532, and his father's name is given as Ātma Rām and his mother's as Hulāsī. His own name was at first Rāmbollā, but when he became a devotee he took the name of Tulsī Dās. The place of his birth is not known with certainty. According to some he was born at Hastināpur; according to others at Hājipur, near Chitrakūṭ. But the tradition which is most generally accepted is that he was born at Rājpur, in the district of Bānda. He was a Kanauji Brahman, and it is said that his guru was Narharidās, who was sixth in preceptorial succession from Rāmananda. He himself tells us, in the introduction to the *Rāmāyag*, that he studied at Śūkar-khet, or Soron. When he was a young man it is said that he loved his wife very much, and one day, when she had gone home to her father's house, Tulsī Dās was greatly troubled on account of separation from her. He therefore hastened after her, although it involved crossing a swollen river in the dark. His wife, however, rebuked him, saying that if only he would have as great devotion to Rāma, the earth would become gold. These words acted as a call to Tulsī Dās. At daybreak he left home, and became a devotee of Rāma, taking up his abode at Benares. There he spent the greater part of his life, though he also visited other places, such as Soron, Ayodhyā, Chitrakūṭ, Allahābad, and Brindāhan. Many legends are told about him, but scarcely anything that is reliable. Nābhā Dās,

the author of the *Bhaktumālā*, is said to have been his friend, and Sūr Dās is also supposed to have visited him. He was not directly connected with the court, though Rājā Mān Singh and Abdul Rahīm Khānkhānā are said to have befriended him, and no doubt he was affected by the artistic influence in literature which was characteristic of the age in which he lived. Tulsī Dās died at Benares in 1624.

The great masterpiece of Tulsī Dās is the *Rāmāyana*. This is the name by which it is generally known, but he himself called it the *Rām-charit-mānasa*, the 'Lake of the Deeds of Rāma.' It was commenced in 1575, according to his own statement in the prologue. The story of Rāma had been told long before by the Sanskrit poet Vālmiki, who lived probably in the fourth century B.C., and it has been a frequent theme of Indian poets in the various languages of India. The *Rāmāyana* of Tulsī Dās is not, however, a translation of that of his Sanskrit predecessor. The general outline of the story is the same, but there is a great deal of difference in treatment. It is only in the broadest outline that the two agree. Not only are there different episodes in each, but even in the main story the incidents are differently placed and often have quite a different complexion. The main difference, however, between the work of Vālmiki and that of Tulsī Dās is in their theological outlook. In books II to VI of Vālmiki's poem Rāma appears as a man and only a man, except in one passage which has been interpolated into the sixth book. The first book, in which Rāma and his brothers are regarded as partial incarnations of Viṣṇu, is considered by scholars as a later addition. In the poem of Tulsī Dās, however, Rāma appears throughout as an incarnation of the Supreme God. The same theological position as that of Tulsī Dās was also characteristic of a Sanskrit work by an unknown poet called the *Adhyātma Rāmāyana*, the date of which is not earlier than the fourteenth century A.D. It is not unlikely that it was this work which was the real precursor of Tulsī Dās's *Rāmāyana*. Besides their theological attitude they have other points in common, but even a casual acquaintance with the two poems will make it clear that the work of Tulsī Dās is far superior in poetic merit.

Tulsī Dās was in line with that tendency of the *bhakti*



movement, which we have already noted in a previous chapter, in using the vernacular for his great poem. But he knew he would meet with his critics especially amongst the Sanskrit pandits, who would affect to despise his work as a concession to the uneducated multitude. There is quite a long passage in the introduction to the *Rāmāyana* in which he vindicates his style against the critics. 'My lot,' he writes, 'is low, my purpose high; but I am confident of one thing, that the good will be gratified to hear me though fools may laugh. The laughter of fools will be grateful to me—as they have no taste for poetry nor love for Rāma I am glad that they should laugh. If my homely speech and poor wit are fit subjects for laughter, let them laugh; it is no fault of mine. If they have no understanding of true devotion to the Lord, the tale will seem insipid enough; but to the true and orthodox worshippers of Hari and Hara the story of Raghubar will be sweet as honey.' The wonderful acceptance, however, which the poem of Tulsī Dās has received has been its greatest vindication. Amongst all classes of the Hindu community in North India, with the exception perhaps of a few Sanskrit pandits, it is today everywhere appreciated and venerated whether by rich or poor, old or young, learned or unlearned, and it has sometimes been called the Bible of the Hindu people of North India.

One most commendable feature of the *Rāmāyana* is its pure and lofty moral tone, in which it compares very favourably with the literature put forth by some of the devotees of Kṛishṇa. In one passage, in which Tulsī Dās has been explaining why he calls his poem the 'Lake (or "pond") of Rāma's deeds,' he says, 'Sensual wretches are like the cranes and crows that have no part in such a pond nor ever come near it; for here are no prurient and seductive stories, like snails or frogs and acum on the water, and therefore the lustful crow and greedy crane, if they do come, are disappointed.' This claim made by Tulsī Dās was a just one, and it is this feature of his poem which has given it so much value in holding up a high moral ideal before its readers.

The dialect which Tulsī Dās uses is the old Baiswāri, or Avadhī, dialect of Eastern Hindi, and through his influence Rāmāite poetry since his day has generally been in this dialect.

He uses, however, many words from other dialects, especially from Braj Bhāṣā. His language abounds in colloquialisms, and Tulsi Dās has little scruple in altering a word, or adopting a corrupt pronunciation, to make it fit into his metre or rhyme. Like other Indian poets, he makes use of many conventional similes and stereotyped phrases. The gem which is supposed to be in the serpent's head, and the mythical power of the swan to separate milk from the water with which it has been mixed, and his constant use of such phrases as 'lotus-feet,' are examples. But there are many other passages which show that Tulsi Dās was a true observer and lover of nature. In one place he speaks of King Dasarath, in his great distress, writhing 'like a fish in the scout of a turbid river,' a passage which, Mr. Growse tells us, puzzled commentators until someone discovered that this was a true phenomenon of nature. Tulsi Dās's love of nature comes out in many such passages as the following, taken from the *Ārunya Kāṇḍ*:

The Lord went on from there to the shore of the deep and beautiful lake called Paṇḍā; its water as clear as the soul of the saints; with charming flights of swans on each of its four sides; where herons of different kinds came as they listed, to drink of the flood, like crowds of beggars at a good man's gate. Under its cover of dense lotus-leaves the water was as difficult to distinguish as is the unembodied supreme spirit under the veil of delusive phenomena. The happy fish were all in placid repose at the bottom of the deep pool, like the days of the righteous that are passed in peace. Lotusess of many colours displayed their flowers; there was a buzzing of garrulous bees, both honeyseekers and humble-bees; while swans and waterfowl were so many you would think they had recognised the Lord and were telling his praises. The geese and cranes and other birds were so numerous that only seeing would be believing, no words could describe them. The delightful voice of so many beautiful birds seemed as an invitation to the wayfarer. The sages had built themselves a house near the lake, with magnificent forest-trees all round—the *champa*, the *mālavi*, the *hastur* and *rasula*, the *pātala*, the *kuthal*, the *dhāk* and the mango. Every tree had put forth its new leaves and flowers and was resoundant with swarms of bees. A delightful air, soft, cool and fragrant, was ever in delicious motion, and the cooing of the cuckoos was so pleasant to hear that a saint's meditation would be broken by it. The trees, laden with fruits, bowed low to the ground, like a generous soul whom every increase of fortune renders only more humble than before.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Translation by Mr. F. S. Growse.

The story is divided into seven chapters, or *kāṇḍ*s, named respectively *Bāl*, *Ayodhyā*, *Aranya*, *Kishkindhā*, *Sundar*, *Lankā*, and *Uttara*. Of these the second, which describes the scenes at Ayodhyā that led up to Rāma's banishment to the forest, is considered the best. The characters are consistently drawn, and many of the scenes are full of deep pathos. The grief of Dusrath, the filial piety, meekness, generosity and nobility of Rāma, the wifely devotion of Sitā, the courage and enthusiasm of Lakshman, the unselfishness of Bharat, as the genius of Tulsi Dās has described them, cannot but awaken a response in the heart of the reader.

The object which Tulsi Dās had in mind, however, was not merely to tell in beautiful verse a wonderful story, but to use it as a vehicle for preaching the supreme value of the worship of Rāma. Though Tulsi Dās accepted, like other leaders of the Vāishnava movement, the pantheistic teaching of the Vedānta, it was tempered by belief in a personal God, whom he identified with the incarnation Rāma. His poem is a passionate appeal to men to devote themselves to the worship of this God. The theological digressions which Tulsi Dās sometimes makes, and the frequent hymns he inserts, may be to some extent a drawback to the literary value of the *Rāmāyaṇ*, but they are excused by the purpose which Tulsi Dās had in view. In these hymns the powers of Tulsi Dās as a poet are manifest, and even those who do not accept his religious ideas cannot but admire the spiritual earnestness which the hymns display. The following is from the *Bāl Kāṇḍ*:

To the King of heaven be all glory given, refuge of creation in  
distress and care,  
Priests and kins befriending, hell's brief triumph ending, best  
beloved of Lakshmi, Ocean's daughter fast,  
Heaven and earth's upholder, who, than all men holder, darest  
to scan the secret of thy strange mysterious way?  
Ever kind and loving, humble souls approving, may thy gracious  
favour reach now to me, I pray.  
Spirit all-pervading, fleshly sense evading, hail Mukund immor-  
tal, lord of blessedness supreme.  
Ever pure and holy, whom the Queen of Folly has no power to  
tangle in her world-defiling dream.  
Glory, glory, glory, theme of endless story, sung by saints and  
sages in an ecstasy of love.

Daily, nightly going on the night streaming, source of every blessing, (Hari, lord of heaven above,  
 True incarnation, who at earth's creation, wert alone presiding,  
 and other aid was none;  
 Though in prayer unable, and my faith unstable, O great sin-de-  
 stroyer, hear our hapless prayer.  
 Life's alarms dispelling, all dangers quelling, comfort of the  
 faithful, be our succour now;  
 All the gods implore thee, falling low before thee, with uncon-  
 quered submission of body, soul and vow.  
 Lord God Bhagavān, Ved and the Purāṇs, Sārada and Śishupāl,  
 and all the santly throng,  
 Find thee theme too spacious, only know thee gracious; hasten  
 thou to help us in our hour of wrong.  
 In all grace excelling, Beauty's chosen dwelling, ark on life's dark  
 ocean, home of all most sweet,  
 God and saints and sages, now this banquet sages, fly in con-  
 sternation to clasp thy lotus feet.<sup>1</sup>

The *Rāmāyaṇ* is undoubtedly a great poem, worthy to rank amongst the great classical masterpieces of the world's literature. It is not indeed without its literary defects, and other Hindi poets, such as Sūr Dās, may have excelled Tulsi Dās in the polish of their verse and their handling of metres. But the *Rāmāyaṇ* of Tulsi Dās will always hold its place as the work of a great literary genius. The importance of its influence, too, cannot be exaggerated. Tulsi Dās founded no sect, and indeed added nothing to the theology of that school of Hinduism to which he belonged, but there is no doubt that the *Rāmāyaṇ* has been the most potent factor in making Vaishnavism the accepted cult of the vast majority of Hindus in North India today.

A brief mention must be made of the other literary works of Tulsi Dās. All of them have the object of popularizing the worship of Rāma. In the *Rām Gitāvalī*, Tulsi Dās tells the story of Rāma in verses which are adapted for singing. The *Dohāvalī*, or *Dohā Rāmāyaṇ*, is a collection of *dohās* and is not so much an epic poem as a moral work. Sir George Grierson thinks that it is probably a collection of *dohās* from other poems of Tulsi Dās, made by a later hand. The *Kavittāvalī*, or *Kavittāraṇandā*, also deals with the story of Rāma and is written in *kavittā* metre. The *Vinay Patrikā*

<sup>1</sup> Translation by Mr. F. S. Growse.

is a collection of hymns to Rāma and is a work which is very much admired. The *Sat Sai* is a similar work to that which Bihārī Lāl wrote fifty years later, but is connected with Rāma instead of with Kṛishṇa. It contains seven hundred emblematic *dhātā*. It is dated 1585. A great many other works also are ascribed to Tulsi Dās, but with regard to the genuineness of some of them there is a great deal of doubt. Although the *Rām-charit-mānās* is undoubtedly his greatest work, his poetic powers are also exhibited in the other works which he composed.

**The Bhaktamālā.**—It marks the greatness of the achievement of Tulsi Dās that amongst Rāmānandīs, or other worshippers of Rāma as the incarnation of the Supreme, there seem to be fewer Hindi works of outstanding importance than in other sections of the Vaishṇava movement, and this is no doubt due to the dominating influence of Tulsi Dās's great work. There are, however, some writers who must be mentioned. The *Bhaktamālā* was the work of Nābhā Dās (fl. 1600), who was also known as Nārāyaṇ Dās. He was the disciple of Agra Dās, who according to some was a leader of the Vallabha movement of Kṛishṇa worship, but by others is said to have been a disciple of Rāmānanda. Nābhā Dās was a Domb by caste, and it is said that when he was a child he was exposed by his parents during a time of famine to perish in the woods. Agra Dās found him and brought him up. It was the suggestion of his preceptor that Nābhā Dās, when he arrived at maturity, wrote the *Bhaktamālā*, probably somewhere between 1585 and 1623. The *Bhaktamālā*, or 'Roll of the Bhagats,' is a poem in old Western Hindi, written mainly in the *chappai* metre. It gives an account of the principal Vaishṇava devotees, whether worshippers of Rāma or of Kṛishṇa, though it deals chiefly with those who were worshippers of Rāma. Nābhā Dās himself seems to have been a Rāmānandī. The style is very obscure and compressed. Generally one stanza only is given to each devotee, and in this his chief characteristics are described in the briefest possible manner, with allusions to different legendary events in his life. The *Bhaktamālā* holds a very important place in Indian religious history. It would, however, be almost unintelligible but for the commentary which always accom-

panies it. This was written in the *karītā* metre by *Prīyā Dās* in 1712. In this commentary further legends are added. There have also been other later commentators, and their work is often printed together with the original text of *Nābhā Dās* and the gloss of *Prīyā Dās*. The *Bhaktamālā* has been fully translated and adapted in all the chief vernaculars of India.

**Maluk Dās.**—*Maluk Dās*, who lived in the reign of Aurangzeb, was the founder of a sect which is closely connected with the Rāmānandīs. The Maluk Dāsīs worship Rāma as an incarnation of the Supreme and also use images. The main difference between this sect and that of the Rāmānandīs seems to be that the teachers of the Maluk Dāsīs are not ascetics, but, like their founder, laymen. Maluk Dās was a trader by occupation, and is said to have been born at Karā, in the district of Allahabad, and to have died at Jagannāth. Monasteries of his followers at Karā and other places are still in existence. The works ascribed to Maluk Dās include the following: *Das Ratna* ('The Ten Jewels'); *Bhaktatattva*, which deals with Kṛishṇa's regard for his devotees; *Ratna-khāna*, which is a dissertation on the soul and God. He is also the reputed author of a large number of detached verses and apophthegms which are still quoted amongst the people. A famous one is translated as follows, and has been compared with the teaching of St. Matt. vi. 26:

The python doth no service, nor hath the fowl of the air a duty  
to perform (to earn its living);

Quoth Maluk Dās, For all doth Rāma provide their daily bread.

The idea of the anuplet is based on the belief current in India that the python (*śūgēṣa*) is unable to hunt for its food, but has to wait with its mouth open for its prey to walk into it.

**Other Works connected with the Worship of Rāma.**—A disciple of Tulsi Dās, who was also his constant companion, was *Beni Mādhub Dās* (fl. 1600). He is said to have written a biography of his master called *Gaurāma Charit*, and was also the author of other works, including a *Nakṣhikā*. Besides the *Rāmāyaṇ* (or *Rām-charit-mānasa*) and other works of Tulsi Dās dealing with the story of Rāma, there appeared during

this period several other works connected with the same subject. *Chintāmaṇī Tripāṭī* (fl. 1650), who is mentioned in the previous chapter as a writer on the art of poetry, also wrote a *Rāmāyaṇ* in *āvṛtta* and other metres.

*Mān Dās* (born 1623), of Braj, wrote a Hindi poem entitled *Rāmcharit*, which is founded on two Sanskrit works, the *Rāmāyaṇ* of Vālmīki and the *Hamamān Nāṭaka*.

*Ishvari Prasad Tripāṭī* (fl. 1671) wrote the *Rām Bilās Rāmāyaṇ*, which is a translation of Vālmīki's poem.

*Bāl Ah* (fl. circ. 1692) was the author of two works, both in praise of Rāma and Sītā, and entitled *Nehprahās* and *Sītā Rām Dhyānamanjari*. *Jōsh Ramlāl Saran* (fl. 1703) wrote the *Anandh Sūgar*, which is a poem in honour of Rāma. *Bhagwant Ray* (fl. 1750) was the ruler of Asothar, in the district of Fatehpur, and for several years resisted the attacks of the Mughal Emperor, till he was killed by treachery in 1760. He was the author of a *Rāmāyaṇ*. Another work dealing with the story of Rāma was the *Rām Bilās* of *Samṛth Nāth* (fl. 1750). *Tulsi Sāhib* (1763-1843) was the eldest son of the Rājā of Poona, but was unwilling to succeed to the throne. He therefore left his kingdom and renounced the world, and becoming a wandering ascetic finally settled in Hāthras. Besides many hymns, he wrote a work called the *Ghaṭ-Rāmāyaṇ*. He claimed that in a previous birth he was none other than the great Tulsi Dās himself, and had in that birth composed the *Ghaṭ-Rāmāyaṇ*, but as it aroused a great deal of opposition it was not published to the world but the *Rām-charit-mānās* was substituted in its place. His work differs in style and language, as well as in subject matter, from that of his more-renowned namesake, and is decidedly inferior in character.

*Madhu Sūdam Dās* (fl. circ. 1782), who was a poet of considerable merit, was the author of the *Rāmāyānamadhā*, in which he describes the horse-sacrifice made by Rāma. Like Tulsi Dās he was a devotee of Rāma, and his poetry resembles that of the great master.

*Maniyār Singh*, also called *Yār* (fl. circ. 1785), was another devotee of Rāma who was a skilful poet. He was a Kshatriya, of Benares. His works include the *Saundarya Laharī*, the *Sundarkāṇḍ*, and the *Hamamān Chhabitī*, all of

which deal with some of the legends regarding Rāma and Hanumān.

*Ganesh* (fl. 1800), who was patronised by the Rājā of Benares, besides other poetical works, composed in Hindī verse a translation of part of Vālmiki's *Rāmāyana*.





## THE SUCCESSORS OF KABĪR

**The Kabirpanthis.**—The great influence which the teaching of Kabir exercised is shown by the large number of sects which owe their origin to the ideas which he promulgated. These sects have their literature in the vernacular. The Kabirpanthis, who trace their direct origin to Kabir, have two divisions. One has its centre at the Kabir-chaurs in Benares, and is also associated with Maghar, where Kabir died. The other has its centre in Chhattisgarh, in the Central Provinces. Each of these divisions is ruled by a *mahant*, and each has its literature. The descent of the Benares *mahants* is traced back to Surst Gopāl, and that of the Chhattisgarh *mahants* to Dharm Das. These are sometimes said to have been personal disciples of Kabir, but probably lived a little later. Although the Kabirpanthis have as a whole kept free from the worship of images, Hindu influence has in various ways found its way back into the sect. Kabir rejected the doctrine of divine incarnation, but he himself is often now regarded as an incarnation of the Supreme. Hindu practices which he condemned, such as the use of the *pantry*, have been introduced. Except the works ascribed to Kabir himself, the large amount of literature belonging to this sect has been scarcely examined by those outside the sect. The *Bijak*, already mentioned in connection with Kabir, was probably compiled about fifty years after his death. Two other works belonging to this sect may also be mentioned. These are the *Sukh Nidhān*, which probably belongs to about the middle of the eighteenth century, and the *Amar Māl*, which is probably as late as 1800. A Kabirpanthi who flourished about 1800 and wrote some pithy verses in *kundaliya* metre was *Palu Sahib*.

**The Sikhs.**—It has already been mentioned in a previous

chapter that the religion of the Sikhs, founded by Nānak, was greatly influenced by the teaching of Kabir. Nānak was followed by nine *gurus*, most of whom were poets. The sacred book of the Sikhs, called the *Granth Sikāh* (or sometimes the *Adi Granth*, i.e. 'Original Granth,' to distinguish it from the later *Granth of the Tenth Guru*), was compiled in 1604 by Guru Arjun (1563-1606), who was the sixth Guru of the Sikhs. It contains the compositions of Guru Nānak, Guru Angad, Guru Amar Dās, Guru Rām Dās, Guru Arjun, Guru Teg Buhādūr (the ninth Guru) and a *cruxifier* of Guru Govind Singh (the tenth Guru). The compositions of these last two Gurus were added after the first compilation. Besides the writings of these Gurus, the *Granth* also contains panegyrics of the Gurus by the *bards* who attended on them or admired their characters, and hymns of several *bhagats*, such as Nāmdēv, Kabir and others, whose teachings corroborated that of the Gurus. The hymns are not arranged in the *Granth* according to their authors but according to the thirty-one *Rāgs*, or musical measures, to which they were composed. All the Gurus, except the last, adopted the name of Nānak as their *nom de plume*. At the beginning of the volume is placed the *Japī*, which was composed by Nānak, and then follow the *Sa-Durā*, the *Sa-purkhā*, and the *Saikhā*, which are extracts from later parts of the books. All these pieces were intended for devotional purposes, and therefore placed at the beginning of the book. After the *Rāgs* at the end of the volume is the *Bhag*, or conclusion, which contains *ślokas* and panegyrics. The whole forms a lengthy volume, the ideas which it contains being repeated in endless variation. For the Sikhs it is a hymn-book and prayer-book as well as a manual of theology. The language varies in different parts, but for the most part the hymns are written in old dialects of Hindi with some admixture of Punjabi. A hymn of Guru Nānak was given in a previous chapter. The following is one of the hymns of Guru Arjun:

On the way where the miles cannot be counted,  
The name of God shall there be thy provision;  
On the way where there is pitch darkness,  
The name of God shall accompany and light thee;  
On the way where nobody knoweth thee,

The name of God shall be there to recognise thee;  
 Where there is very terrible heat and great sunshine,  
 There the name of God shall be a shadow over thee;  
 There, saith Nānak, the name of God shall rain nectar on thee.<sup>1</sup>

The tenth Guru, whose name was Govind Singh, held office from 1675 to 1708. It was he who developed the Sikhs into a great military order called the Khālsā and organized them to resist the Muhammadans. Under him many Hindu ideas were introduced into the religion of the Sikhs. Govind Singh composed many verses, mostly in Hindī (Braj Bhāshā), but some also in Persian and Punjabi. These works, together with the translations and other verses of some in the Guru's employ, were collected in the year 1734, after Govind Singh's death, by Bhai Mani Singh into one volume, which is called the *Granth of the Tenth Guru* to distinguish it from the *Adi Granth*. It is used for the promotion of valour and other purposes, but it is not regarded by the Sikhs as having the same authority as the *Adi Granth*. Besides the *Jappi*, or hymns, in praise of God, and many other religious verses, it contains the *Vichitr Nānak*, which is an account of the life and mission of Govind Singh, and other poems calculated to stir up the martial valour of the Sikhs.

The Dadupanthis.—The founder of the sect of Dādūpanthi was Dādū (1544–1603), who was born at Ahmedābād, but spent most of his life in Rājputāna. According to common report he was a cotton-carder by caste, but the tradition of his followers that he was a Brahman is probably correct. His spirit of forgiveness and kindness (*dayā*) was so great that he was called Dādū Dayāl. His teaching is very similar to that of Kabir, but is not so much affected by Muhammadan ideas. Much of the Hinduism against which Dādū protested has found its way back into the sect. Dādū rejected, for instance, the teaching of the Vedānta, caste, and idolatry, but some of his modern followers are Vedāntists, and only twice-born Hindus are allowed to read the *Bāni*, and the sect has no dealings at all with outcastes. Moreover, Dādū's *Bāni* is worshipped with idolatrous rites. Dādū's teaching was spread by fifty-two disciples. His doctrines are contained in the *Bāni*, a book of

<sup>1</sup> Translation by Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion*, Vol. III, 202.

about five thousand verses. It is divided into thirty-seven chapters dealing with such subjects as the Divine Teacher, Remembrance, Separation, The Meeting, The Mind, Truth, The Good, Faith, Prayer, etc. The verses of Dādū are very attractive and have a musical rhythm, and hymns which are included amongst them are set to music and used both for public and private worship. The following is a translation of a few of Dādū's verses:

Receive that which is perfect into your hearts to the exclusion of all besides; abandon all things for the love of God, for this Dādū declares is the true devotion.

Cast off pride, and become acquainted with that which is devoid of sin. Attach yourselves to Rāma, who is sinless, and suffer the thread of your meditations to be upon him.

All have it in their power to take away their own lives, but they cannot release their souls from punishment; for God alone is able to pardon the soul, though few deserve His mercy.

Listen to the admonitions of God, and you will care not for hunger nor for thirst; neither for heat, nor cold; ye will be absolved from the imperfections of the flesh.

Draw your mind forth, from within, and dedicate it to God; because if ye subdue the imperfections of your flesh, ye will think only of God.

If ye call upon God, ye will be able to subdue your imperfections, and the evil inclinations of your mind will depart from you; but they will return to you again when ye cease to call upon him.

Dādū loved Rāma incessantly; he perused of his spiritual essence and constantly examined the mirror, which was within him.

He subdued the imperfections of the flesh, and overcame all evil inclinations; he crushed every improper desire, wherefore the light of Rāma will shine upon him.<sup>1</sup>

The sect which Dādū founded has a very large literature in Hindi. Dādū's two sons were poets, and all his fifty-two disciples are reported to have composed verses, as well as many later followers. The most important poet amongst his disciples was *Saundar Dās* the younger (fl. 1620-1650), who is also called *Būar*. By the Dādūpanthis he is regarded as one of the best Hindi poets, worthy to rank amongst the highest names in Hindi literature. He was a voluminous writer. Amongst his most admired works are his *Satnāyas* (sometimes called the *Sundar Bīlās*) and the *Gyān Samudra*. *Nīchal Dās*,

<sup>1</sup> Translation by G. R. Siddons, in *The Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol. VI (1837).

a later Dādūpanthī poet, introduced Vedāntic ideas into the teaching of the sect.

**The Lal Dās.**—*Lāl Dās*, who died in 1648, was the founder of a sect known as the Lal Dās. He belonged to Alwar, and came from a predatory tribe called the Meos. Like other teachers whose doctrines can be traced to Kabir's influence, he emphasized the value of the repetition of the name of Rāma. His teaching and hymns are contained in a work called the *Bānī*. The members of the sect often sing the hymns to music.

**The Sādhs.**—The sect of the Sādhs was founded in 1658 by *Bīr Bhān*, and is found chiefly in the upper part of the Doab. Bīr Bhān claimed to have received his doctrines from a superhuman instructor in the form of verses (*sādhās*) and couplets (*nābhās*). These were collected into a volume called the *Adi Upadeś* ('Original Instruction'). These verses, together with those of other teachers like Kabir, Nānak and Dādū, are recited at the meetings of the sect.

**Dharm Dās.**—*Dharm Dās* was born in 1656 and lived at the village of Mānjhā, in the district of Chhaprā. He was a Kāyasth by caste, and became a devotee. He founded a sect which still survives. He is the reputed author of two Hindi works, the *Satyā Prabhā* and the *Prem Prabhā*.

**Some Sufi Poets.**—A Muhammadan who wrote Hindi verses was *Yārī Sāhib* (1668-1723). He seems to have been a Sūfi, and lived and taught at Delhi. Some of his disciples also wrote Hindi verse, such as *Kiām Dās* and *Bullā Sāhib*, both of whom flourished about 1730. A disciple of Bullā Sāhib was *Gulāl Sāhib*, and the latter had a disciple called *Bhikkhā Sāhib*. Both of these flourished in the latter half of the eighteenth century, and both are the reputed authors of Hindi verse. Two other Hindi writers who may have been connected with the same, or a similar movement, are *Dariyā Sāhib* of Bihār, and *Dariyā Sāhib* of Mārwār. Both of these were Muhammadans and flourished in the first half of the eighteenth century. Another Muhammadan writer of Hindi verse who also lived in the first half of the eighteenth century was *Bulle Shāh*, and was probably a Sūfi.

**The Charan Dās.**—*Charan Dās* (1703-1782) belonged to the *Ḍhūsar* caste of *Baniyās*. About the year 1730 he

founded a sect at Delhi, which still exists. He had many disciples who spread his teaching, and he admitted as disciples not only men but women also. His teaching is very similar to that of Kabir and emphasises such doctrines as the value of the repetition of the name of God, the importance of the word (*fāḥḥa*), the need of devotion (*śāhṭi*), and the necessity of having a *guru*. Idolatry was denounced by Charan Dās, but has crept back into the sect. The *guru* holds a very important place in the sect and is regarded as divine. Like similar sects, it has a large literature in Hindi, and great stress is laid on this amongst its members, the use of Sanskrit being discouraged. The sect possesses translations in Hindi of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* and the *Bhagavad Gītā*, which are said to have been made, at least in part, by Charan Dās himself. Charan Dās also composed many other Hindi works which are much esteemed by his followers. Two of his women disciples were poetesses. These were *Sahaja Bāl* and *Dayā Bāl*. They are said to have been sisters and to have belonged to the same caste as Charan Dās. Their verses are of considerable merit and full of devotion. The *Dayā Bāl* of Dayā Bāl was composed in 1751.

**The Siv Narayans.**—Śiv Nārāyaṇ was a Rājput who lived near Ghazipur. In 1734 he founded a sect which worships God as Brahman without attributes, and rejects idolatry. Śiv Nārāyaṇ is himself regarded as an incarnation by his followers. Outward conformity to the observances of Hindus and Muhammadans is permitted, and people of all castes are admitted as members. It is said that the Emperor Muhammad Shāh (1719-1748) became a member of the sect. The founder was a voluminous writer and is credited with having composed sixteen books of Hindi verse.

**The Garib Dasis.**—The *guru* of Garib Dās (1717-1782) is said to have been Kabir, which, although an anachronism, seems to show that the sect he founded sprang from the Kabirpanthis. This sect, which is still in existence, consists only of *sāhṭis*, who must belong to the twice-born castes. The book which he composed, called the *Guru Granth Sāhīb*, contains 24,000 *sāhṭis* and *chāupāis*. Of these, however, 7,000 are said to be *sāhṭis* of Kabir. Garib Dās lived at the village of Chhurani, in the Rohtak district of the Punjab.

**The Rām Saṅghis.**—The sect of Rām Saṅghis was founded by Rām Charaṇ (born 1718), who lived in Rājputāna. He was at first an idolater, but gave up the worship of idols and founded the sect of *Rām Saṅghis*, or 'Lovers of Rām.' The sect is now represented merely by an order of *sādhus*. His sayings and hymns have been collected into a *Bānī*. The third leader of the sect, named *Dulhā Rām*, who became a Rām Saṅghī in 1776, composed about 10,000 *śabdas* and 4,000 *nāṁs*. He died in 1824.

**The Satnāmīs and Jagjīvan Dās.**—The sect of the Satnāmīs seems to have been founded before the middle of the seventeenth century, but the circumstances of its origin are unknown. It was reorganised about 1750 by Jagjīvan Dās, who lived at Kotwa, between Lucknow and Ayodhyā. As the name of the sect implies, they adore the True Name alone, the one God, who is without attributes, but the Hindu pantheon is recognised and the Hindu incarnations regarded as the manifestations of God. Jagjīvan Dās is said to have been a Kshatriya by caste, but the sect has spread mostly amongst the outcastes. The Hindi verses of Jagjīvan Dās are in several works, which include the *Pratham Granth*, the *Mahāpralāy*, and the *Gyān Prakhāś*. A disciple of Jagjīvan named *Dulāś Dās*, who lived in the district of Rai Bareilly, was also a Hindi poet. Other successors of Jagjīvan who wrote Hindi verse were *Jalāl Dās* and *Devī Dās*. A development of the Satnāmī sect occurred in Chhattāgarh, in the Central Provinces, under a certain Ghāzi Dās, between 1820 and 1830. He introduced the ideas of the sect amongst the *chamār* of that district, though he did not acknowledge his indebtedness to Jagjīvan.

**The Prān Nāthīs.**—*Prān Nāth* lived at Pannā, in Bundelkhāṇḍ, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, under the patronage of Rājā Chhatrasāl. He was the founder of a small sect in which not only Hindu and Muhammadan but also Christian influences were at work. By caste Prān Nāth was a Kshatriya, but he was versed in Muhammadan as well as in Hindu learning, and he endeavoured to reconcile the two religions. The members of his sect are sometimes called *Dhānis*, from *Dhām*, a name they give to the Supreme Spirit. They eat in common, but continue to observe the Hindu or

Muhammadian practices of their own families. The works of Prāg Nāth are fourteen in number, all in verse, but none of them of very great length. Though the grammatical structure is purely Hindi, the vocabulary is very largely Arabic or Persian, and the language is very unsmooth.

**General Characteristics.**—All the writers who are mentioned in this chapter wrote in that poetic style which is classified by Indian authorities as *quiescentic* (*śānta ras*). Much of their verse is smooth and rhythmical, and the artistic influences which had come into Hindi literature were no doubt felt by them to a certain extent. But their interest was religious rather than literary, and few of them rank high amongst Hindi poets. If their verses are less rugged than those of Kabir, they are also often lacking in the vigour and charm which characterise his work. The subjects dealt with in these voluminous works are not very extensive. The need of a *guru* and the respect due to him; the value of the repetition of the name of God, the supreme importance of devotion (*Bhakti*), the delusions of *māyā*, the value of truth, the duty of living a righteous and sober life, these and a few kindred topics are repeated over and over again, in different ways, at interminable length, in a manner which to the ordinary reader is apt to be tedious. Nevertheless there are many striking passages to be found which are full of beauty and inculcate valuable lessons. During the greater part of this period the north of India was passing through a time of great political change. The reign of Aurangzeb (1658-1707) was a long struggle against disintegrating forces, and after him the political disorder grew worse. Internecine strife and rebellion were frequent. The invasions of Nādir Shāh (1739) and afterwards of Ahmad Shāh Durrāni (1756) were a time of terrible disaster. The Marāṭhas also were constantly attacking the Mughal Empire, which by the end of this period ceased to exist except in name. It was a time of frequent calamity, of persecution and tyranny; but during this period many thoughtful men sought peace of heart in piety and quietism, and it was in such circumstances that much of the religious verse referred to in this chapter was produced. In these poems the writers not only expressed their own aspiration and feeling after God, but gave forth



many beautiful thoughts which were a solace to others in times of distress, and an incentive to them to live nobly and to seek after the highest ends. The sects whose literature is described in this chapter all owe something to Kāfir, in some cases the influence being direct and in others indirect. They all stand, in theory at least, for a non-idolotrous theism, and a great many of their theological conceptions are the same as, or similar to, those which Kāfir taught.



## VIII

### THE KRISHNA CULT

(1556-1800)

**The Ashta Chhāp.**—Vallabhāchārya and his son Viṭṭhal-nāth, who have been mentioned in a previous chapter as the early leaders of the Vallabhāchāri sect at Gobardhan, near Muttra, each had four disciples, all of whom were Hindi poets. They are known as the *Ashta Chhāp*, or the Eight Seals, or Diestamps, because the poems they produced are regarded as standards for that dialect of Western Hindi in which they wrote. This dialect was the Braj Bhāshā, named after the district in which they lived, namely Muttra and Brindāban and the surrounding country. Since their time almost all Hindi poetry connected with the Kṛishṇa cult has been composed in Braj Bhāshā, and it has also come to be looked upon as the poetic dialect of Hindi *par excellence*, though Tulsi Dās and most of the worshippers of Rāma wrote in Eastern Hindi. The disciples of Vallabhāchārya who are included in the *Ashta Chhāp* were *Sūr Dās*, *Kṛishṇa Dās*, *Pay Ahīrī*, *Paramānand Dās* and *Kumhār Dās*. Those of Viṭṭhalnāth were *Chaturbhuj Dās*, *Chhāt Swāmī*, *Nand Dās* and *Govind Dās*. All these flourished about the middle or second half of the sixteenth century.

*Kṛishṇa Dās Pay Ahīrī* seems to have been a rival of Sūr Dās, though not equal to him in poetical merit. He was, however, the writer of graceful and melodious stanzas. His best known work is called the *Premattousarūp*. Kṛishṇa Dās had several pupils who became poets. According to some, one of them was Agra Dās (fl. 1575), who was in turn the preceptor of Nābhā Dās, author of the *Bhaktamālā*.

*Nand Dās* holds, next to Sūr Dās, the highest place as a poet amongst those who are included in the *Ashta Chhāp*.

He was a Brahman, and some have believed him to be a brother of the great Tulsī Dās. There is a proverb about him which says, *Aur sab juriyā, Nand Dās juriyā*, 'All others are simply founders (or melters), but Nand Dās is the artificer (who joins the pieces of metal into a composite whole).' He was the author of several larger works as well as of detached verses. One of his compositions is a poem in imitation of the Sanskrit *Gītā Govinda*, called *Panchādhyāyī*.

**Sūr Dās.**—The greatest of all the *Akha Chhāp*, however, was *Sūr Dās*. The particulars of his life are very scanty and uncertain. It is said that he was a Brahman and the son of Bālā Rām Dās, who was a singer at the court of the Emperor Akbar. At the age of eight he went with his parents to Muttra, and became the pupil of a devotee. Afterwards he removed to Gāū Chhāp, between Agra and Muttra, where he became a disciple of Vallabhāchārya. In the commentary which he himself wrote to some of his emblematic verses he says that he was a descendant of the famous bard Chand Bardāi, that his father's name was Rām Chandra, and that his grandfather, Hari Chandra, lived at Agra. Some, however, consider him to be a Brahman and regard the verse where this information is given as spurious. His father lived at Gopchal and had seven sons, six of whom were killed in battle with the Muhammadans. He alone, blind (either literally or figuratively) and worthless, as he says, remained alive. He had a vision of Kṛishṇa, and thereafter 'all was darkness' to him, which may mean he became blind. He went to live at Brāj, and became one of the *Akha Chhāp*. Tradition places his birth in 1483 and his death in 1563, but these dates are uncertain. All the traditions agree as to his blindness, either from birth or from a later period of his life, and he is often referred to as 'the blind bard of Agra.'

*Sūr Dās* excelled in many styles of composition. A large number of episodes and passages from the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* were reproduced by him in exquisite verse, and he was the writer of a great number of lyrics in connection with the worship of Kṛishṇa and Rādhā, which were collected together in the *Sūr Sāgar* and the *Sūrāvalī*. The *Sāhityalaharī* contains emblematic verses (*Dṛishṭakāvī*), for which *Sūr Dās* himself wrote an explanatory commentary. He also wrote in

Hindi the story of *Nala and Damayanti*. Altogether he is credited with having composed as many as 75,000 verses. Sūr Dās holds a very high place in literature. Some Indian authorities would give him the foremost place amongst Hindi poets, though most persons would reserve that honour for Tulsī Dās. An often quoted couplet referring to Hindi poetry says, 'Sūr is the sun, Tulsī the moon, Keshav Dās is a cluster of stars, but the poets of today are like so many glow-worms, giving light here and there.' Sūr Dās is undoubtedly a poet of great power. He is considered to excel in his use of all the ornaments of style recognized by the authorities on Hindi poetry and in his use of images and similes. An anonymous poet of Akbar's court said with regard to him, 'Gang excels in sonnets and Birbal in the *Avantī* metre; Keshav's meaning is ever profound, but Sūr possesses the excellency of all three.'

A few specimens of his work are given here:

All days are not alike;

One day King Harischandra had in his power wealth like Mount Meru;

The next day he went to live in the house of a Chandal, and removed clothes from the burying-ground.

One day a man in a bridegroom, attended by a bridal company, and in every direction flags are placed;

The next day he has to live in the forest, and there stretches forth hands and legs.

One day Sītā is crying in a very terrible forest;

The next day, having become re-united with Rāmachandra, both go about in a balloon of flowers.

One day Rājā Yudhishtīra was reigning with Śrī Bhagwān (Kṛṣṇa) as his follower;

The next day (his wife) Draupadī is made naked, and Duśśāsa takes away her clothes.

The doings of the fierce bird appear: O foolish mind, give up anxiety;

Sūr Dās says, 'How far can I describe the qualities? True are letters written by the Creator (on the forehead).'

\* \* \* \* \*

Without Gopāl these bowers become like enemies.

In those days (when he was here) these creepers seemed very cool, Now they have become a heap of fiery flames.

In vain the River Jamunā is flowing, and the birds twitter;

In vain the lotuses are blossoming, and the black bee hums;

Sūr Dās says, 'Looking for the lord, my eyes have become red like the *ghaughatī* seed.'

Night and day my eyes shed tears;  
 It is always the rainy season with me, since Śyām went away.  
 The collyrium does not stay on my eyes, my hands and my  
 cheeks have become dark,  
 The cloth of my bodice never gets dry, because the heart in the  
 midst of it is running like a stream of water.  
 My eyes have become rivers, my limbs tired, and the fixed stars  
 are moving away.  
 Sū Dās says, 'Braj is now being submerged (in tears), why do  
 you not deliver it?'

**The Chaurāsī Vartā.**—An important work which belongs to this period is the *Chaurāsī Vartā* (or 'Eighty-four Tales'), reputed to have been written by *Gokubadh* (fl. 1558), the son of *Viphalnāth*. It is earlier in date than the *Bhaktamālā*, and whereas the *Bhaktamālā* contains accounts of devotees of various Vaiṣṇava sects, the *Chaurāsī Vartā* is devoted exclusively to stories, mostly legendary, of the followers of Vallabhācārya. It lays a great deal of stress on the erotic side of the Kṛiṣṇa legends. From the point of view of the literature it is very important as being written in prose, of which it is one of the earliest specimens. It is written in a very clear and easy style, and although written three hundred and fifty years ago the language used differs very little from the modern Braj dialect.

**Other early Vallabhācharis.**—Two or three other early members of the Vallabhācārī sect who were Hindi poets must also be mentioned. *Bhagmāt Hīt* (fl. circ. 1574) is said have been a disciple of *Viphalnāth*. He was the author of some Kṛiṣṇaite lyrics of considerable merit. *Raskhān* (fl. 1614) was a Muhammadan at first and his name was then *Sayyad Ibrāhīm*. He became a worshipper of Kṛiṣṇa and wrote verses in his honour which are said to be full of devotion and sweetness. A disciple of *Raskhān* was *Qādir Baksh*, who also wrote Hindi poetry.

**The Rādhā-Vallabhis.**—A new sect was founded in Brindāban about 1585 known as the *Rādhā-Vallabhis*. In this sect Rādhā is placed above Kṛiṣṇa as an object of devotion. Its founder was *Hari Varada* (also called *Hīt Haribans* or *Hīt* ॥). His father was a Gauṛ Brahman named *Vyāsa*, who was in the service of the Muhammadan emperor. *Hari Varada* wrote in Sanskrit the *Rādhā-nāṭh-mālā*, which consists of

170 couplets. His principal work in Hindi is the *Chaurāsi Pad* (or *Peṇulātā*). The erotic side of the Kṛishṇa cult is very prominent in these works and they are full of sensuous imagery, but Hārī Vamā possesses great skill as a poet and holds a high place in Hindi literature. A few stanzas are here given:

Whatever my Beloved doeth is pleasing to me; and whatever is pleasing to me, that my Beloved doeth. The place where I would be is in my Beloved's eye; and my Beloved would turn to the apple of my eye. My loss is dearer to me than body, soul, or life; and my Love would lose a thousand lives for me. Rejoice, Śrī Hārī Hārī Vamā! the living pair, one dark, one fair, are (like two eggs); tell us who can separate water from water?

O my Beloved, has the fact spoken? this is surely a beautiful night; the lightning is folded in the busy cloud's embrace. O friend, where is the woman who could quarrel with so exquisite a prince of gallants? Rejoice, Śrī Hārī Vamā! dear Rādhikā beamed with her eyes and with voluptuous emotion joined in love's delight.

Come Rādhā, you knowing, see, your forenoon of lovers has started a dance on the bank of the Yamunā's stream. Bevels of dainties are dancing in all the abandonment of delight; the joyous pipe gives forth a stirring sound. Near the Banārah, a sweetly pretty spot, where the spicy air breathes with delicious softness, where the half-opened umbels fill the world with overpowering fragrances, beneath the clear radiance of the saturated full moon, the milkmaids with captured eyes are gazing on your gladsome lord, all beautiful from head to foot; quick to remove love's every pain. Put your arms about his neck, fair dame, pride of the world, and, tipped in the bosom of the Ocean of delight, disport yourself with Syām in his blooming bow.

Many members of this sect have been Hindi poets, amongst whom we may mention *Nigart Dās*, who flourished at the end of the sixteenth century, *Dhruv Dās* (fl. circ. 1630), who was a very voluminous writer, and *Śrī Hārī Brindāban Dās Ji Chāchā* (fl. 1743). All these were poets of some merit, especially the last, who wrote many verses of great beauty in praise of Kṛishṇa.

**The Hārī Dāsīs.**—Another sect at Brindāban is that of the Hārī Dāsīs. It was founded by *Sākhī Hārī Dās*, who lived at the end of the sixteenth century and the beginning of the seventeenth century. His teaching seems to be closely akin

<sup>1</sup> Translation from Mr. F. S. Growse's *Mathura*, pp. 196 ff.

to that of Chaitanya. Besides works in Sanskrit he left poems in Hindi. The best known are the *Sādhāraṇ Siddhānt* and the *Ras Ke Poś*. Hari Dās possessed considerable merit as a poet. Here are a few stanzas of the *Sādhāraṇ Siddhānt*:

Set your affection on the lotus-eyed, in comparison with whose love all love is worthless; or on the conversation of the saints: that is the sin of your soul may be effaced. The love of Hari is like the durable dye of the madder; but the love of the world is like a stain of saffron that lasts only for two days. Says Hari Dās, Set your affection on Bihārī, and he knowing your heart will remain with you for ever.

A straw is at the mercy of the wind, that blows it about as it will and carries it whither it pleases. So is the realm of Brahma, or of Śiva, or this present world. Says Śrī Hari Dās: This is my conclusion, I have seen none such as Bihārī.

Man is like a fish in the ocean of the world, and other living creatures of various species are as the crocodiles and alligators, while the soul like the wind spreads the entangling net of desire. Again, avarice is as a cage, and the avaricious as divers, and the four objects of life as four compartments of the cage. Says Hari Dās, Those creatures only can escape who ever embrace the feet of the son of bliss.

Fool, why are you clothed in Hari's praises? Death goeth about with his arrows ready. He heedeth not whether it be in season or out of season, but has ever his bow on his shoulder. What avail heaps of pearls and other jewels and elephants tied up at your gate? Says Śrī Hari Dās, Though your queen in rich attire await you in her chamber, all goes for nothing when the darkness of your last day draweth nigh.<sup>1</sup>

Hari Dās was succeeded as leader of the sect by *Vijñān Vīpaś*, and the latter by *Bihārīnī Dās*. Both these were Hindi poets, Bihārīnī Dās being a very voluminous one. In his numerous verses he uses the most erotic language to express the intensity of his religious devotion. *Sitāl* (fl. 1723), who was a leader of the sect, was also a skilful poet. *Sahachari Śaran* (fl. 1763) also belonged to the Hari Dāsīs. Amongst his works is the *Lalit Prakhāś*, which contains sayings of Hari Dās, the founder of the sect.

**Other Writers of Krishna Verse.**—*Gadā Dhar Bhaṭṭ* (fl. 1565) was a Kṛishṇaite belonging to the sect of Chaitanya and wrote verses of considerable merit in Kṛishṇa's honour. *Bihārī Lal Chaudh*, whose work has been described in a

<sup>1</sup> Translation from Mr. F. S. Growse's *Mathura*, p. 210.

previous chapter as a writer on the art of poetry, was also connected with the Krishna cult. Most of the verses in his famous *Sat Sat* deal with some phase or other of the story of Krishna. Other writers on the art of poetry also wrote Krishnaite verse.

*Tāj*, who flourished in the first half of the seventeenth century, was the wife of a Muhammadan, but was a worshipper of Krishna. She wrote some much admired verses in his honour.

*Bhaktima* (fl. circ. 1650) translated the famous tenth chapter of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* into Hindī verse, under the title *Bāl Mukund Līlā*.

*Bakshī Huzarāj* (fl. 1732) was a Kāyasth of Pannā, who was a skilful poet. He wrote the *Samak Sāgar*, which is an account of Rādhā and Krishna, as well as some other works.

*Mūs*, a Brahman of Bāiwāpā, wrote in 1761 a translation of the *Krishna Khayāl* entitled *Krishna Kalol*.

A famous work in connection with the Krishna cult is the *Braj Bilāś* (1770). It was the work of *Braj Bāl Dās*, of Brindāban, and contains a description of Krishna's life during his residence at Brindāban. *Braj Bāl Dās* belonged to the sect of Vallabhāchārya.

*Sundari Kāmari Bāl* (fl. 1760 to 1798) was a princess of the Rājhor family, and daughter of Rāj Singh, Mahārāja of Rūpnagar and Krishnagarh. She was married to Bal Bhadra Singh, Mahārāja of Rāghavgarh. Many of her family were poets, and this lady wrote a large number of poems full of religious devotion, many of which are in honour of Krishna.

*Manohar Dey* (fl. circ. 1779), of Bundelkhand, was the author of *Surbhāṣānāṭh*, which is an account of the childhood of Krishna, and *Krishnāyām*, which is a life of Krishna. His poems are considered to be of a very high standard of poetic excellence.

*Bibi Ratna Kāmār*, of Benares, was born about 1842. She was the grandmother of Rājā Śiv Prasād, who helped to develop Hindī literature in the nineteenth century. In the *Prem Ratna* she has given an account of the devotees of Krishna, and in addition she was the authoress of many other verses.



**General Remarks on Krishnaite Literature.**—A great deal of the poetry connected with the Krishna cult deals with the amours of Krishna with the Gopis (milkmaids) of Braj, and especially with Rādhā. The great Hindu teachers of *bhakti* threw a mystical glamour over these stories. Krishna was to them the Supreme Deity, from whom all creation was but a sportive emanation, and who was full of love to his devotees. Rādhā and the other Gopis stood for human souls, of whom Rādhā especially typified the devotee, ready to offer her whole self in devotion to God. In the literature connected with this form of the *bhakti* movement the writers often use the most erotic language and sensuous imagery to describe the soul's devotion, under the picture of Rādhā's self-abandonment to her beloved. Many of the verses could not be translated into English. Yet the writers of these lyrics of passionate devotion were often men of real religious earnestness, quite free from any impure motives in composing them. That literature of this kind has, however, a very dangerous tendency has too often been shown in the history of the Krishna movement.

Many of the writers mentioned in this chapter were poets of very high merit. The artistic influences which had come into Hindi literature are to be seen in a very marked degree in their work. Muttra, which was the centre of the movement, was in close proximity to the Mughal court, and Sūr Dās is said by tradition to have had some connection with the court. But, through whatever channel the influence came, there is no doubt that the poets of Braj felt very strongly the tendencies towards the perfection of the poetic art, and the excellency and fame of their poetry was so great that from their time onwards Braj Bhāshā came to be regarded as the chief poetic dialect of Hindi.

## IX

### BARDIC AND OTHER LITERATURE

(1550-1800)

**Bards of Mewar.**—The succession of bards in the various kingdoms of Rājputāna and other parts of Hindustan was continued right down to modern times, and Mewār was one of the states where great encouragement was given to them. A chronicle of the time of Rānā Jagat Singh, of Mewār, who reigned from 1628 to 1654, called the *Jagat Bilāś*, was written by an unknown bard. The successor of Jagat Singh, Rānā Rāj Singh (1654-1681), who was the famous opponent of Aurangzeb, was a great patron of poets. The chronicle of his time, called *Rāj Prabhā*, was also written by an anonymous bard. At the suggestion of Rānā Rāj Singh his poet-laureate, *Man* (fl. 1660), wrote the *Rāj Dev Bilāś*, which describes the struggle between Aurangzeb and Rāj Singh. Another poet who lived at his court was *Sadātīn* (fl. 1660), who wrote his patron's life under the title *Rāj Ratsāhar*. The son of Rāj Singh was Rānā Jai Singh (1681-1700) and he also was a patron of poets. A work which he had written by poets at his court was the *Jai Dev Bilāś*, which is a series of lives of the kings whom he had conquered. Another author of a bardic chronicle of Mewār, entitled *Rāj Patnānā*, was *Ran Chhor*, whose date is doubtful.

**Bards of Marwar.**—In Mārwar also great patronage was given to poets. Mahārāja Sūr Singh is said in one day to have distributed six lakhs of rupees to six poets at his court. His son, Gaj Singh, was also a patron of poets, as well as his grandson, Amar Singh. Amar Singh quarrelled with his father and was exiled. He went to the court of the Emperor Shāh Jahān, but in revenge for a slight he attempted to murder the emperor, and was cut down after killing a number

of courtiers. Among the poets patronised by Amar Singh were *Bansūri Lāl*, who wrote a panegyric of his patron, and *Raghu Nāth Rāy*, both of whom flourished about 1634. Mahārāja Ajit Singh, of Jodhpur, in Mārwar (1681-1724), had a work written entitled the *Rāj Rūpakūṭhyūt*, which contains a history of his family from the commencement of the solar race to 1724. *Karan* was the poet and bard of Jodhpur at the time of Mahārāja Abhay Singh (1724-1750), son of Ajit Singh. In his poem, called the *Sūrya Prakāś*, he wrote a history of the period from 1638 to 1731 in 7,500 lines. Mahārāja Vijai Singh, who reigned at Jodhpur from 1753 to 1784, was himself a poet, and he also had a work written, entitled the *Vijai Bān*, which gives an account in 100,000 couplets of the war between Vijai Singh and his cousin Rām Singh.

**Bards at Other Courts.**—Other courts also had their poets. The rebellion of Jagat Singh, of Mithwa, against Shāh Jahān was celebrated by a bard named *Gumbādr Rāy* (fl. 1650). In honour of Rāy Ratan (fl. 1650), great-grandson of Rājā Uday Singh, an anonymous bard wrote a history called *Rao Ratan Rāyān*. Jai Singh Sawai, of Jaipur (reigned 1699-1743), was not only a patron of poets but wrote his own autobiography, entitled *Jai Singh Kalpadrum*. Jai Singh Sawai's brother-in-law, *Budh Rāy*, Rājā of Bōndi, was also a poet and a patron of poets. *Jodhrāj* (fl. 1728) was a Brahman, who wrote the *Hamonir Kāvya* at the orders of the Mahārāja of Nimrūpā, which deals with the same incidents formerly described by the bard Nūrang Dhar, who lived in the fourteenth century. *Ghan Svām Sahas* (fl. circ. 1680) attended the court of the Rājā of Rewah and wrote in his praise. He also attended the court of the Rājā of Benares. His poems are considered to be of great merit. *Harishesh* (fl. 1731) attended the court of Rājā Chhatrasāl, of Pannā. He excelled in the heroic style. *Sūdan* (fl. 1750) was a Brahman, who was patronised by Sūraj Mal, a son of the Mahārāja of Bharatpur. He wrote the *Sujān Charitr*, which is an account of the battles in which Sūraj Mal took part. Sūdan is considered to be an excellent narrative poet, especially in his account of the preparations for a battle, but he was not equal to Lāl Kavi in his description of the battle itself. A bard who wrote in the Maithili

dialect of Bihāri was *Lāl Thā* (fl. 1780), one of the most famous poets of Mithilā. He was the author of a poem called *Kanarpī Ghāt Larā*, which is a description of the battle of Kanarpī Ghāt, in which his patron Mahārāja Narendra Singh, of Darbhanga, was victorious.

**Lāl Kavi.**—At the court of Rājā Chhatrasāl (1646-1731), who ruled at Pannā in Bundelkhand and was himself a poet, much encouragement was given to men of letters. The most famous of these was *Lāl*, generally known as *Lāl Kavi*. His full name was *Gureāl Parohit*. Besides writing a treatise on lovers, he wrote in Braj Bihārī verse a celebrated work entitled *Chhatra Prahīt*. It gives an account of the wars and order of succession of the ancient Rājās of Bundelkhand, and the life of Chhatrasāl and that of his father are related with great detail. Lāl Kavi achieved great excellence as a narrative poet, especially in his description of a battle. The following is the account in the *Chhatra Prahīt* of Rājā Chhatrasāl's bravery at the battle of Deogarh:

Rājā Chhatrasāl, valiant in war, dreadful in battle, famed for heroic achievements, active, vigorous, and powerful as a tiger, penetrated into the midst of the Deogarh Rājā's army; while thousands of balls and arrows discharged at him fell like rain around. Firm and undaunted, redoubling his efforts he furiously attacked the numerous troops by whom he was surrounded. Entirely disregarding balls and bullets, he inflicted and received wounds in the enemy's ranks. The foe was confounded. The gods were amazed at the fighting of Chhatrasāl; and, while repelling the attack of thousands, and smothering death and destruction around, Kālī delighted to see his sword-dance. His progress no one could stop; for, as soon as an antagonist had raised his sword, Chhatrasāl, by superior dexterity, inflicted a wound; and he was equally skilful in the use of the spear. Separated from his troops, and surrounded by foes, he fought his way from one flank of their army to the other. Wherever he went, victory followed. Disregarding severe wounds, he renewed the attack, fighting with such impetuosity and fury, that the enemy, believing him to be Kāl Rudra, took to flight, and abandoned the field. Chhatrasāl obtained lasting fame and renown; for the enemy fled like deer from a tiger. The kettle-drums sounded strains of victory, and Bahadūr Khān ordered the camp to be pitched.<sup>1</sup>

**Other Literature of the Period.**—Besides the literature we have already mentioned in this and the preceding chapters, there were many other writers on a variety of subjects during

<sup>1</sup> Translation by W. R. Pagnon, *A History of the Bundelas*.

the period. There are works dealing with the philosophy of the Vedānta, works connected with the Jain religion, works on morals (*nīti*), comic verses, and a great many other topics, including text-books on such subjects as lexicography, agriculture, astronomy and veterinary surgery. A few of the authors may be mentioned here:

*Nāth Kavi* (fl. 1584), who dwelt in Braj, wrote poems on the seasons and other subjects.

*Mulārāh Ali* (b. 1583), of Bāgrām, in the district of Hardoi, was the author of a large number of short verses which are still current.

*Nāir* (fl. before 1600), of Agra, was a versatile poet of considerable fame whose verses are very popular and often quoted, though many of them are said to be indecent.

*Banāri Dās* (b. 1586) was a follower of the Jain religion. He lived at Jaunpur and died some time after 1641. His works are full of religious teaching and he is much admired as a poet. In his most famous work he gives an account of his own life.

*Śrī Dhar* (b. 1623), of Rājputāra, was the author of a work in honour of Durgā and entitled *Bhāmīnī Chakrad*.

*Ghātī Rām* (fl. circ. 1623) was a poet of considerable merit, who wrote on love, morals and other subjects.

*Pahār* (fl. 1634) was a Kayasth who lived during the time of Jahāngir. He was in prison for some offence and while there composed the *Ras Ratn*. When Jahāngir heard of this he pardoned him. The poem is in the form of a story.

*Dāmodar Dās* (fl. circ. 1660) belonged to the sect of the Dādūpanthis. He translated the *Mārkandeya Purāna* into Rājasthānī. This work is of interest as being in prose instead of verse.

*Chhatra* (fl. 1700), a Kayasth of Anjar village, in Gwalior, was the author of the *Vijai Muktimukti*. This is an abstract of the *Mahābhārata* in Hindi verse.

*Sabal Singh* (b. 1670) belonged to a ruling family. He also was the author of a condensed metrical translation of 24,000 verses of the *Mahābhārata*.

*Baitāl* (b. 1677) attended the court of Vikram Sāhi. He wrote moral and occasional verses and, though no complete work of his is extant, his verses are much admired.

*Deni Dās* (fl. 1685) belonged to Bundelkhand. Under the patronage of Rājā Ratan Pāl Singh, of Karauli, he wrote a much admired work on morals called *Prem Ratnākhar*. He was also the author of numerous other works.

*Moṭi Rām* (b. 1683) was the author of the Braj Bhāshā version of a story called *Mādhomal*, which was afterwards translated into Urdu by *Lailā Ji Lal*.

*Bhū Dhar Dās* (fl. 1724) was a Jain who wrote works connected with the Jain religion, including the *Jain Śataḥ* and the *Pāriva Purāṇ*. He is considered to possess considerable power as a poet.

*Ghāṅḍ* (b. 1696), of Kamauj, wrote on the subject of agriculture. His aphorisms have a wide currency in North India.

*Gurṅā Pati* (fl. 1719) was the author of a poem dealing with the different philosophical doctrines of the Hindus. It is called *Vigyān Bilāṣ*, and is written in the form of a dialogue between a *guru* (teacher) and his *chela* (disciple). A mystic life based on the Vedānta philosophy is advocated.

*Kripā Rām* (fl. 1720) was an astronomer at the court of Rājā Jai Singh Sawāi, of Jaipur, and wrote a work in Hindi on astronomy.

*Giri Dhar* (b. 1713), of the Doab, wrote verses on morals (*nāt*) and occasional pieces which are much admired. He used the *kupālāya* metre, of which some critics consider him to be the greatest master. His verses abound in colloquialisms and many of them have become proverbs.

*Śrī Nāgarī Dās* (fl. 1723) was Mahārāja of Kṛṣṇagaṛh in Rājputāna. His real name was Sāvai Singh, but he adopted the name of Nāgarī Dās as his *nom de plume*. He was a poet of considerable merit besides being a king of great valour.

*Nūr Muḥammad* (fl. 1743) was the author of the *Indrāvatī*. It is a love story similar to the *Padmāvatī* of Malīk Muḥammad. It is considered to be a well-written poem.

*Manbodh Jhā* (fl. 1750), also known as *Bhola Jhā*, of the district of Darbhāṅgā, was one of the most celebrated poets in the Maithilī dialect of Bihār. He wrote a version of the *Harivaṃśa*, of which only ten sections have been preserved. These, however, are very popular.

*Nidhān* (fl. 1751) and *Dayā Nidhi* (b. 1754) each wrote a treatise on veterinary surgery under the title *Śāhibzār*.

*Rām Chandra* was a Brahman who flourished at the end of the eighteenth century. He wrote a work in five books in honour of the feet of Pārvati, entitled *Charaṇ Chandrahā*. It is considered to be a work of great poetic merit.



## X

### THE MODERN PERIOD

(From 1800)

A NEW influence came into Hindi literature at the beginning of the nineteenth century through contact with the culture of the West. The eighteenth century had been largely a time of literary dearth, but a renaissance now began. The East India Company, which had commenced its career in India as a trading company, had now come into possession of a vast Empire and was beginning to feel its responsibilities towards those whom it was called upon to govern. This responsibility was being continually urged by many in the British Parliament. Amongst other responsibilities that were recognised was the duty of fostering and helping the culture and education of the peoples under the rule of the Company. The introduction of the printing-press helped to diffuse literary culture. The spread not only of vernacular but of English education could not but have a vast effect upon the life and thought of India. Just as in the case of the revival of learning in Europe the study of the Latin and Greek classics not only led to a stimulation of thought, but also helped to revive the literature of the European vernaculars, so also in India the study of English has been accompanied by a great renaissance of the vernacular literature of India. The peace and security which the British rule brought to India, after the long period of internecine strife and disorder through which the country had been passing, also gave the genius of Hindi literature the opportunity of reasserting itself, and of recovering from the decay into which it had fallen in the eighteenth century. This period is marked by the creation of a new Hindi literary dialect and of Hindi prose.

Lallu Ji Lal.—At the commencement of the nineteenth



century the head of the Fort William College at Calcutta was Dr. John Gilchrist. With the help of the other European officers of the College, such as Captain Abraham Lockett, Professor J. W. Taylor, and Dr. Hunter, he gave a great impetus to the cultivation of vernacular literature. Text-books suitable for the study of the European officials were collected, and a group of vernacular scholars gathered together and encouraged to produce new literature. Most of the work was in connection with the Urdu language, but *Lallū Ji Lal*, who also wrote Urdu, and *Sadal Miṭra*, did for Hindi what was being done by other scholars for Urdu. The works which they produced, if not the first prose works in those languages, were the first literary standards, and established prose as a recognised form of literature. *Lallū Ji Lal* was a Brahman whose family had come originally from Gujarat, but had long been settled in North India. Under the direction of Dr. John Gilchrist he and *Sadal Miṭra* were the creators of modern 'High Hindi.' Many dialects of Hindi were, as we have seen, spoken in North India, but the vehicle of polite speech amongst those who did not know Persian was Urdu. Urdu, however, had a vocabulary borrowed largely from the Persian and Arabic languages, which were specially connected with Muhammadanism. A literary language for Hindi-speaking people which could commend itself more to Hindus was very desirable, and the result was produced by taking Urdu and expelling from it words of Persian or Arabic origin, and substituting for them words of Sanskrit or Hindi origin. The name *Khari Boli* ('pure speech') is sometimes used for the dialect of Delhi and Meerut, which was the language from which Urdu sprang, as well as for the modern Hindi literary dialect. It seems to be implied that *Lallū Ji Lal* was only restoring the Delhi and Meerut dialect to its original purity and using it for literary purposes. This, however, was hardly the case, for though Urdu sprang originally from this dialect it had also assimilated many words of Punjabi and Rājasthāni as well as those of Arabic and Persian origin. The Hindi of *Lallū Ji Lal* was really a new literary dialect. This 'High Hindi,' or 'Standard Hindi' as it is also called, has had however a great success. It has been adopted as the literary speech of

millions in North India. Poetical works still continue to be written in *Brāj Bhāṣā*, or *Avadhī*, or other old dialects, as High Hindi has not been much used for poetry. But whereas before this time prose works in Hindi were very rare, from now onwards an extensive prose literature began to be produced. The first work in this new dialect, and one which is regarded as a standard, was Lallū Jī Lāl's *Preṃ Sāgar*, which is a version of the tenth chapter of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*. It was founded on a previous *Brāj Bhāṣā* version of Caturbhuj Miśra, and was begun in 1804 and completed in 1810. The *Rājini* (1809), which is also much admired for its language, was an adaptation of the *Hitopadeśa* and the *Panchatantra*, and is in *Brāj Bhāṣā*. The *Singhāsān Ratnā* and the *Baitāl Pachīs* are collections of stories in mixed Urdu and Hindi. Besides other works in Hindi and Urdu, Lallū Jī Lāl also wrote a commentary on the *Sat Sai* of Bihārī Lāl called *Lāl Chandrikā*, and gathered a collection of poems in *Brāj Bhāṣā* called *Sākhā Bālā*. Sadul Miśra (fl. 1803) was the author of the *Nāḥetopakhyaṇ*, which gives in Hindi prose the well-known story of Nachiketas.

**Serampore.**—In connection with the revival of Hindi literature mention must also be made of the work being done about this time by William Carey and his colleagues Ward and Marshman at Serampore. Amongst the many translations of the Christian Scriptures made by these missionaries were some in the dialects of North India. The Hindi version was Carey's own work. The first portions of his Hindi New Testament were published in 1809 and the Hindi translation of the whole Bible was completed in 1818. Besides translations of the Scriptures, Carey and his colleagues also printed editions of many vernacular works, amongst them being the *Rāmāyaṇ*. Most of these editions perished in a fire which destroyed the printing-press at Serampore in 1812. In 1818 Carey began to publish a newspaper in Bengali, which was the first newspaper printed in any oriental language, and was the forerunner of the many newspapers now issued from the vernacular press. All this work of Carey and his co-workers helped greatly in the development of vernacular literature.

**Raja Siv Prasad.**—The new literary dialect which Lallū Jī Lāl produced has not been without its critics. As it

includes many Sanskrit words it is a speech not easy to be understood except by the learned. It tends to fall into the same extreme as Urdu. Rājā Śiv Prasad (1823-1895) is especially remembered as one who tried to popularise a literary speech midway between the Persian-ridden Urdu, and the Sanskrit-ridden High Hindi, which he believed to be nearer the colloquial speech of the people. The controversy is by no means settled yet. Rājā Śiv Prasad was the grandson of the poetess Bibi Ratan Kuvār. In his youth he was Vakīl to the Mahārāja of Bharatpur, but afterwards he entered the English service. He rose to the position of Nūr Munshi and became an Inspector in the Department of Public Instruction. He was eventually granted the hereditary title of Rājā. Besides translations and other works, all of which show the modern influence, he was the author of a great many text-books for schools.

The Printing-Press.—The outstanding feature of the development of Hindi literature in modern times has been the production of a very large number of works in prose. This has been very much facilitated by the use of the printing-press. It was at the College press at Fort William that printing was first used for Hindi works, but at first the expense hindered its rapid development, and the ungraceful characters of the type were not regarded with favour. The work of Carey and others at Serampore has already been mentioned. In 1837 a lithographic press was set up at Delhi, and from that date onwards the publication of books in Hindi has been increasing continually. The introduction of lithography was soon followed by the publication of Hindi newspapers and magazines, of which there are now a large number. All kinds of books have been turned out from the press—translations of English books, books and pamphlets dealing with religious and social questions, novels, educational text-books, and books on many other subjects; but it cannot be said with regard to most of them that a high literary standard has yet been reached, and experience alone will show how many of them are worthy to rank as standard works of Hindi literature. Hindi prose literature is still feeling its way, and its standards are not yet fixed. One book which has had probably a greater circulation than any other Hindi work in

modern times (whether as a whole or in portions) is the Hindi translation of the Bible, and owing to its large circulation is bound to have an important influence on the life of the people. The printing-press has also been used to produce many of the older works of Hindi literature, which are now accessible to the general public in a way which was before impossible.

**Harischandra.**—That the new influence from the West revived rather than checked the cultivation of Hindi poetry is illustrated in the case of *Bābū Harischandra* (1850-1885), of Benares, who is often called *Bhāratendu* ('The moon of India'). He was educated at Queen's College, Benares, and was a prolific and successful writer of poetry in many styles, having commenced to write at the age of sixteen. He wrote altogether about a hundred and seventy-five different works. Among these are eighteen plays, and Harischandra was the real founder of the modern drama in India. In his plays some of his best work is to be found, and they exhibit his great desire for the progress of India and the development of its intellectual freedom.

Harischandra wrote also on various subjects, including history, patriotism, religious devotion and love. He was also the author of many humorous verses. His historical works include the *Kāshmir Kāsem*, or history of Kashmir, and the *Charitavali*, a series of lives of great men both Indian and European. Next to his plays his love poems are considered to be the best part of his work. Love and mirth are prominent characteristics of his poetry, which is full of power. He must be reckoned amongst the great writers of Hindi literature. He used chiefly the *Braj Bhāshā* dialect. Harischandra also did much to cultivate interest in Hindi poetry. To accomplish this he started a magazine called *Harichand-rīti*, in which he published a number of old texts with much other matter. He also produced anthologies of Hindi poetry such as the *Sandarbī Tilak*, which contains poems in the *śarāyā* metre from the works of sixty-nine poets, and the *Kavi Bāchan Sudhā*, which is a collection of poems dealing with the rainy season.

As an example of the poetry of Harischandra the following translation is given:

O warriors, having put on your arms, arise for the fight, and fly  
 the flag of victory;  
 Draw your sword from the scabbard, and join the battle.  
 Having girded up your loins, put your arrow to your bow;  
 Put on your saffron-coloured garments and the bracelet of battle  
 (as sign of a vow to conquer or die);  
 If the Aryans be united, and think of their own dignity,  
 They will give us quarters amongst themselves, and support  
 the honour of their race.  
 Then the strength of the mean Amurkias cannot be great.  
 When a lion is roused, can a dog stand in battle against him?  
 Even an ant trampled underfoot him, although it is only insignificant.  
 These are visible enemies, woe to those who ignore them.  
 Woe to those who, being Aryans, have a love to those who are  
 barbarians.  
 Woe to those who have any dealings with them.  
 Warriors, arise, and having put on all your weapons, plunge into  
 the battle.  
 Write with a pen of steel the strength of the Aryans on the heart  
 of both (conquerors and conquered).

**The Hindi and Bihari Drama.**—The Hindi drama is of very recent origin. Some earlier writers produced what are called *nāṭks*, or plays. Among these were Dev (fl. 1700), the author of *Dev Māyā Prapanch*; Newāj (fl. 1700), who wrote the *Sakuntalā*; Ūrāj Bād Dās (fl. 1770), who wrote the *Prabodh Chandroday*, and some others. But their works were either without entrances and exits of the characters, or lacking in other essentials of dramatic poetry. The first real play in Hindi was the *Nahash Nāṭak*, written by Gopāl Chānd (alias *Giri Dhor Dās*) in 1857. It deals with Indra's expulsion from his throne by Nahush and his subsequent reinstatement. Next came the *Sakuntalā* (1862) of Rājā Lakshman Singh (1826-1899), which is very famous and much admired. *Harichandra* then began to write dramas, his first being *Vidyā Sunder*. He wrote eighteen altogether. Other writers of Hindi drama were Śrinivās Dās, Totā Rām, Gopāl Rām, Kālī Nāth Khattrī, Puruṣh Gopī Nāth, Lālā Sitā Rām, besides many others. The first Hindi play was performed in 1868.

In Bihār the dramatic tradition is very much older. *Vidyūpati Thākur*, who belongs to the middle of the fifteenth century, is reputed to be the author of two plays. *Lāl Jhā* (fl. 1780) wrote a play called *Gaurī Parinay*. In the early

part of the nineteenth century *Bhāna Nāth Jhā* wrote the *Prabhāvatī Haran* and later *Harsh Nāth Jhā* wrote the *Ushā Haran*. The Bihārī drama, however, differs from the Hindi in one very important feature, for the characters speak in Sanskrit and Prākṛit, and only the songs are written in the Maithilī dialect.

**Anthologies.**—The revival of interest in Hindi literature and its appeal through the printing-press to a wider public is illustrated by the large number of anthologies of Hindi verse which have appeared in this period. Besides those of Lallū Ji Lal and Harischandra, which have already been mentioned, the following may be noted:

The *Rāj-Sagarodhār Rāj Kalpadrum* contains selections from the works of more than two hundred poets. It is a very voluminous work and was compiled by a Brahman named *Kṛishnānand Pyas Deo*, and completed in 1843.

The *Ras Chandrosay*, which is a collection of poems by two hundred and forty-two poets, was compiled in 1863 by *Thakur Prasad Tripathi*.

The *Dig-Vijay Bhāṣay* was compiled in the year 1869 by a Kayasth, of Ballia, in the district of Gonda, named *Gokul Prasad*. It contains selections from the works of a hundred and ninety-two poets.

The *Sit Singh Saroj* was compiled from former anthologies by *Sit Singh Sengar*. The second edition of this very valuable work was published in 1881.

**Gokul Nāth.**—A famous work belonging to this period was the translation of the *Mahābhārata* into Hindi verse. This was begun by *Gokul Nāth* (fl. 1820), of Benares, being undertaken at the instance of *Raja Udit Nārāyan*, of Benares. *Gokul Nāth* was the author of other works, including the *Govind Sukhad Bihār* and the *Chet Chandrikā*, in the latter of which he has described the family history of *Raja Chet Singh*, of Benares, who was his patron. His greatest achievement, however, was the translations of the *Mahābhārata*. In this work he was assisted by his son *Gopi Nāth* and his pupil *Mari Deo*.

**The Patronage of Courts.**—The modern influence on Hindi literature did not spread all at once, and in many places the old state of affairs still continued for some time.

The work of the printing-press did not penetrate into all regions immediately, and poets still looked to the rulers of states to help them by their patronage. At the courts of Pannā and Charkhāt in Bundelkhand, of Rewah in Baghelkhand, of Nagpur, Benares, Ayodhyā, and other principalities, poets and bards were still welcomed and encouraged, and several rulers were themselves poets. Mahārāja Mān Singh of Jodhpur (fl. 1810) was the author of various works, chiefly in Rājasthānī. *Chandra Sekhar Bājpey* (1798-1875), who was at the courts of Darbhanga, Jodhpur and Patiala, excelled in the erotic and heroic styles and was the author of the *Hamir Hath* and other works. Mahārāja Hindupati, of Pannā, was the patron of *Mohan Bhatt*, as well as of *Rup Sāhi* and *Karna* (fl. circ. 1800), the latter being a writer on the art of poetry. *Mohan Bhatt* attended other courts also. His son was a well-known poet named *Padmākar Bhatt* (see below), who also visited various courts. The Rājas of Charkhāt, named *Khumān Singh*, *Vikram Sāhi*, and *Ratan Singh*, were all great patrons of poets. *Vikram Sāhi* (1785-1828) was himself a successful poet. Among his works is a *Sar Sāi*, in imitation of Bihārī Lal's great work. The poets who attended his court include *Baitāl*, *Mūn*, and *Bāl Dev* (all fl. 1820). *Bihārī Lal*, *Asadhar*, *Ram Rānā*, *Gopal*, *Rām Din Tripathī* (all fl. 1840) attended the court of Rājā Ratan Singh. *Sūrya Malla* (fl. 1840), who was at the court of the Rājā of Būndi, wrote a long work called the *Bani Bhāskar*, which in the form of illustrative verses gives an account of the Kingdom of Būndi. In Baghelkhand, at the court of Rewah, poets were also encouraged both by Mahārāja *Jai Singh* (fl. 1764-1834) and his son *Vīramān Singh* (1789-1854). Both these kings not only patronised poets but were themselves authors. *Viśvanāth Singh* wrote in Sanskrit and Hindi. In Hindi he composed commentaries on the *Bijak* of Kabir and on the *Vinay Patrikā* of Tulsī Dās, as well as a work entitled *Rām Chandra Ji Samāri*. The poetical traditions of this royal family were also maintained by *Viśvanāth's* successor, Rājā *Raghū Rāj Singh* (1823-1879), who came to the throne in 1858. He was the author of a much admired translation of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* and of a history of Hamirān, entitled *Sundar Satak* besides many other works. Mahārāja *Mān Singh* (fl. 1850),

nā Ayndhyā, was another monarch who was both a poet and a patron of poets.

**The Art of Poetry.**—Many of the poets who attended the courts of kings were writers on the art of poetry, and this particular form of composition continued to receive great attention. *Gurān Pīṇḍe* (fl. 1803) wrote an excellent work on the same lines as Keśav Dās's *Kamī Priyā*. *Bend Pravin Bājpeyī* (fl. 1817), a Brahman of Lucknow, whose poetry is full of excellent verses, wrote several works connected with the art of poetry. One of the most famous of writers of this period was *Padmākar Bhūṭ* (1753–1833), of Bāndā. He attended the courts of various rulers and was richly rewarded for his poetry. He is the reputed author of about seven works, mostly concerning the art of poetry, which are very much praised. One of his outstanding qualities is his skilful use of alliteration. His best work is considered to be the *Jagadnāma* (1810). At the end of his days he is said to have devoted his life to the worship of the Ganges, and wrote a book entitled *Gangā Laharī*. His grandson, *Gadā Dhar Bhūṭ* (fl. 1860), was also a poet and wrote on rhetoric. A contemporary and rival of Padmākar was *Ghōṣ*, of Muttra, who wrote works on the art of poetry. His most famous work is the *Yamunā Laharī*. About the same time or a little later flourished also *Rām Sahāy Dās* (1820), of Benares, and *Pojner* (1843), of Fannā. The former, who was a poet of considerable merit, took *Bihārī Lāl* as his model. *Pratāp Sāhī* (fl. 1828) was a devotee of Rāma and the author of several works connected with the art of poetry. In the cleverness of his language he is said to resemble *Matī Rām*. *Bihārī Lāl Tripāthī* (fl. 1840) belonged to a family which has produced many poets, being a descendant of *Matī Rām Tripāthī*. *Nāṭh* (fl. 1842) wrote several works of high standard on poetics. *Gaṇesh Prasād Farukhābādī* (fl. 1847–1877) was a Kayasth, of Farukhābād, who wrote a *Nahkūkh* and other works. *Giri Dhar Dās* (fl. 1843) was the father of *Harīschandra*. His real name was *Gopāl Chandra*. He wrote about forty different works. *Sardār* (1845–1883), of Benares, and *Nārāyaṇ Rāy* flourished in the second half of the nineteenth century. The former was the author of several works on the art of poetry, including commentaries on the works of *Keśav Dās* and on the *Sat Sai* of *Bihārī Lāl*,



and a commentary on some of the emblematic couplets of *Sūr Dās*. The *Śringār Saigraḥ*, another poem of Sardār, is a popular work on rhetoric, dealing with all branches of the art of poetry. Nārāyaṇ Rāy was a pupil of Sardār. A much admired work in the Mārṇarī dialect is the *Raghunāth Rūpak* of Manā Rām, which was written about the beginning of the nineteenth century. It is a prose-drama in which the illustrative examples are so arranged that they give a continuous history of the life of Rām.

**Bihari Poets.**—A few Bihari poets of the nineteenth century may be mentioned, all of whom wrote in the Maithili dialect. *Bhānu Nāth Jhī* (fl. 1850) and *Harsh Nāth Jhī* (born 1847) both attended the court of the Mahārāja of Darbhanga. Bhānu Nāth's best known work is a play entitled *Prabhāsoṭi Haray*. Harsh Nāth wrote many songs as well as plays. A popular account of the famine of 1873-74, entitled *Kavita Chhāl*, was written by *Phulārī Lal*, a Kāyasth of Tirhut. *Chandra Jhī*, who flourished in the latter half of the nineteenth century, was the author of a *Rāmāyaṇ* in Maithili, which is much admired.

**Religious Verse.**—Though a great deal of the literature already described has a religious connection, the output of religious verse due directly to the various sectarian movements seems to have been less since the beginning of the nineteenth century than in previous times. Contact with the new influences which have come from the West has led indeed to a great deal of religious activity in India, but a large part of the new movements has been in the direction of religious reform. Prose literature, whether in the form of pamphlets or newspapers, has come to be very much used for the dissemination of religious as well as other ideas. Still, the production of poetry in connection with the various religious movements did not entirely cease. In 1806 *Jai Chand* of Jaipur, wrote a Sanskrit and Hindi work which deals with the doctrines of the Jains, entitled *Sāṁsi Kārttikē-yāṇuprelāha*. A later Jain of considerable merit was *Brindāhan Jī* (circ. 1791-1858), of Benares. *Bakhtāwar* (fl. 1817), of Hathras, in the district of Aligarh, who was a religious mendicant, wrote a book entitled *Sāṁsiar*, which was intended to show that all notions of God and man are fallacies and that

nothing exists. There were several works also connected with the Rāma cult. Mīs (fl. 1803) was the author of the *Rām Rāyon Yudh* and other works dealing with the stories of Rāma. Laluk Dās (fl. 1815), of the Lucknow district, wrote the *Satyopākhyān*, which relates the early life of Rāma from his birth to his marriage. The *Rāmāyān* in the Maithili dialect, composed by *Chandra Thā*, has already been mentioned. *Sahaj Rām* (born 1804), who lived in the district of Sitāpur, also wrote a *Rāmāyān* which is a translation of the Sanskrit *Raghuvamśa* and of the *Harimām Nāṭaka*. In the latter half of the nineteenth century *Raghu Nāth Dās*, a Brahman of Ayodhyā, wrote hundreds of hymns in honour of Rāma, of whom he was a devotee, while in the same period *Jānki Prasad*, of the district of Rae Bareilly, wrote several poems dealing with the story of Rāma which are considered to be very excellent. Commentaries also were written on the works of Tulsi Dās, such as the *Māmar Saṅkṣepaṇ of Bāndan Pothah*, of Benares, which is a commentary on the *Rāmāyān* and the *Rām Tatva Buddant* of *Siv Prabhā Singh*, which is a commentary on the *Vinay Patrikā*. These appeared in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Of writers who were devotees of Kṛṣṇa the following may be mentioned: *Ruṣi Govind* (fl. 1801), who wrote works, which are much praised, all connected with the Kṛṣṇa legends, and *Lalit Kāhori* (fl. 1860-1873), whose works are also connected with Kṛṣṇa and full of merit as works of poetry.

The spread of the Christian faith in India has also been accompanied by the production of Christian hymns. Many of these are translations of English hymns written in English metres, which, judged according to Indian standards, sound barbarous and uncouth. But a large number have also been written in Hindi metres, and many of these have a popularity far beyond the bounds of the Christian Church. Curiously enough, one of the most famous writers of Christian hymns in Hindi metre was a European named *John Christian* (died about 1883). His most famous work is the *Mukti Muktāvali*, a life of Christ in verse.

Thus, while the nineteenth century was a period of great change, characterised especially by the development of prose literature, and the application of it to a large number of new

subjects, literature of the older type still continued to be produced, though it generally exhibited little or no novelty in its themes. The period has been largely a time of transition, and in spite of its many past glories Hindi literature still awaits its more complete development. No attempt is here made to give an account of the writers in prose and poetry of the last thirty or forty years. Many of these writers are still living, and time alone will show how much of their work will have a lasting fame and prove of real value.



## XI

### SOME GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF HINDI LITERATURE

HAVING NOW traced the history of Hindi literature from its earliest times to the present day, it may be helpful to mention in this chapter some of its general characteristics, even at the risk of some repetition of points already mentioned.

1. The first striking feature is that, during the time when it grew and flourished through its own original force, Hindi literature was dominated by a *religious interest*. Probably much more than half of the literature directly springs from the *bhakti* movement in one or other of its aspects. A great deal of the remainder is concerned with the art of poetry; and even in these works the illustrative verses, which form the greater part of them, are often connected with one or other of the various religious movements. The bardic chronicles, and some other parts of the literature, are secular in character, but even in these the religious interest is not quite out of sight.

2. Until the beginning of the nineteenth century practically the whole of the literature was in verse. There are indeed a few exceptions. The works ascribed to Gorakhnāth (though almost certainly not by him) include one in prose, and if this is correctly dated as belonging to the fourteenth century it is the earliest Hindi prose work extant. Then we have the *Maṇḍan* of Viṣṇunāth and the *Chaurāsī Vārā* of Gokul Nāth in the sixteenth century, and Dīnadar Dās's translation of the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* in the seventeenth century. Besides these, and the commentaries which accompanied certain works, there is very little else till we come to the time of Lallū Ji Lal. Even commentaries were often in the form of poetry. The system of versification was very

complicated, but all authors seem to have found it more natural to write verse than prose. When prose was first employed, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, writers at first found it more awkward and difficult to manage than poetry. Even text-books on such subjects as veterinary surgery, astronomy or lexicography were written in verse.

3. From about the middle of the sixteenth century the literature became self-conscious, and from the time of Keshav Das onwards an enormous number of works have appeared dealing with the rules of prosody and the art of poetry generally. Apart from verse of a directly religious character, this was indeed the favourite subject of composition amongst Hindi poets. The tendency to lay great stress on the form rather than the substance, and to develop a certain amount of artificiality could not, under such circumstances, be avoided. It is considered a mark of a writer's ability if his words are capable of more than one meaning, and ingenuity of phrase, whether by way of *double entendre*, or alliteration, or any other literary device, is greatly admired. Even nowadays there seems to be a tendency to appraise poets more on account of their technical skill than on account of the message which they have to give. But even so the writers on the art of poetry, who include some of the best Hindi writers, have produced a great deal of verse which is very graceful and artistic, and it must be said that the strict rules as to versification, and their great elaboration, have helped to make Hindi poetry almost unrivalled for melody and rhythm.

4. *Conventionality* in the use of metaphors is another feature of Hindi poetry. Some of these metaphors do not correspond with the facts of nature, but Hindi poets are never tired of repeating them. The separation of the *chakori* bird from its mate at night; the eager waiting of the *chitak* bird, who is supposed to drink only raindrops, for the beginning of the rainy season; the *chakor* bird, that is never happy except when gazing on the moon; the swan that knows how to separate milk from the water with which it has been mixed—these and many other stock metaphors are continually recurring in Hindi poets. But many beautiful similes, drawn from a true observation of nature at first hand, are also found not only

in the works of Tulsi Dās, but also in the verses of other poets.

5. Another thing to be noticed in Hindi poetry is the *limitation of the range of its subject matter*. Not only is the religious interest dominant, but even in connection with this the subjects dealt with are confined to well-worn grooves. The stories of Rāma and of Kṛṣṇa form a very large part of the subject matter, and have been told over and over again by poet after poet. There are differences in treatment, but the same details are constantly appearing again and again. Those religious poets who avoid these themes are very largely occupied with such subjects as have already been noted in a previous chapter, namely, the value of the guru, the importance of *bhakti*, the evils of transmigration, the deceit of *māyā*, the transitoriness of the world, and suchlike subjects. One misses also the poetry of pure human love. There is, indeed, a good deal of erotic poetry of a very unhealthy type, but owing to the general practice of child-marriage, and the secluded position occupied by women, the romantic period of youth, which is the time of courtship, does not come into the lot of young men and women in India, and hence when love is described in Hindi poetry it is too often in connection with the courtesan. But the fidelity of Padmāvatī, the wifely devotion of Sītā, and some other stories of the same type must not, on the other hand, be forgotten. There was also a tendency to look to previous writers for themes of poetic inspiration, and if a great poet achieved success in any subject, he was sure to have a large number of imitators. Thus there are whole realms of human thought in connection with which Hindi writers have contributed nothing, and great as their work has been, the original and stimulating thoughts which Hindi literature contains are confined within a somewhat narrow area.

6. Yet in spite of its limitations Hindi literature has many excellencies, and is worthy of much greater study than it has yet received. It has truly been described as a 'garden of delights.' It possesses a system and variety of versification which has seldom, if ever, been excelled, and beauties of thought and phrase, and expressions of deep feeling and noble aspiration abound. It was moreover genuinely popular, and

being written in the dialects of the people, and often as a tacit revolt against the literary exclusiveness of the Sanskrit scholars, it appealed to the heart of the people, and reached a very wide audience. Many of its thoughts and expressions have become closely bound up with the life of the people, and a close acquaintance with the vernacular literature is most important for all who would fully understand the peoples of India.



## PRESENT POSITION AND PROSPECTS OF HINDI LITERATURE

WITH such a splendid record of past achievements what is the present position of Hindi literature? What are its prospects of development? A brief answer to these questions is all that can be attempted in this present chapter.

In the first place it is to be noted that Hindi literature has to face many present difficulties, some of which it shares with other Indian vernaculars, and some of which are peculiar to itself. This is not the place to discuss the question whether English or the vernacular should be the medium of instruction in higher education. But it is certainly true that most educated Indian people would be very sorry that their sons should surrender the opportunity which a knowledge of English gives not only of becoming acquainted with the vast stores of Western learning, but of carrying on intercourse with educated people from other parts of India who possess a different vernacular from their own. It is, however, almost unavoidable that such a state of affairs should put Hindi somewhat at a disadvantage, for if a writer wishes to appeal to a widespread educated audience it is natural for him to use English rather than the vernacular to express his ideas, and hence there is sometimes a tendency to despise the vernacular as a medium of literature, and to regard vernacular productions as more intended for the unlearned than for the educated. This is a condition of things in every way to be deplored, and it is to be hoped that, without lessening the opportunities for securing an acquaintance with English, the vernacular may be given a much more important place in the future.

Hindi is also under a disadvantage because its standards of prose have not yet been fixed. We have seen that not only



is the prose literature a plant of very recent growth, but that the dialect of High Hindi which it uses is also a modern production. There are scarcely any prose standards of the past to look to, and the present state of the language is transitional. Some authors attempt to write in a language from which are expelled, as far as possible, all words other than those of Hindi or Sanskrit origin. But if this standard be adopted the language is for the common folk very difficult to understand. Other writers go to the opposite extreme and admit a great many words not only of Arabic and Persian, but also of English origin, even when there are simple and well-understood Hindi words which could just as well express their meaning. It seems indeed inevitable that for the expression of modern ideas a good deal of borrowing must take place, but the limits to which this should go can only be settled in course of time by the practice of good prose writers. At present there is a great deal of variation, both in translations and original works, with regard to the language used, and the adoption of some generally recognised standard is very much to be desired.

Owing to Hindi prose literature being written in a modern artificial dialect, which has not proved itself very popular for the purposes of poetry, it has come about not only that the language of poetry is different from that of prose, but that there are several different dialects still used for poetry. The existence of a widely divergent standard between the language of prose and that of poetry would be unfortunate in many ways, and it cannot be said what the ultimate issue of this matter will be, but there does seem a tendency amongst some modern poets to use a language which is approximating more to that of prose.

These disadvantages to the present development of Hindi literature are, however, being counteracted by many favourable circumstances. The spread of education, with the prospect that the day is not far distant when it will be made compulsory, at least for boys, is helping to increase rapidly the number of those who can read. Moreover, the modern tendency to extend the franchise, and to give increased political responsibility to large numbers of the people of India will also make it necessary to acquaint them with

various aspects of modern political, social, religious, and other questions. It is impossible, with increasing education and enlightenment, that a language which can be understood by over a hundred millions of people should not eventually develop a great modern literature, though it may not be easy to forecast the exact lines of its development.

The existence of societies for the extension and improvement of Hindi literature is also a sign of great hope. The *Nāgarī Prachārini Sabha*, whose headquarters are at Benares, is doing most useful work. It conducts a systematic search for old manuscripts, and publishes many good editions of the older works of Hindi literature. It also issues many useful books in which a high standard is aimed at. It encourages Hindi writers to produce original books and also to translate important books from European languages. Amongst other works it has undertaken the publication of a standard Hindi dictionary in several volumes. Many others also are publishing the works of various Hindi authors, whose works up till now have existed only in manuscript, and have often been hardly known outside the particular sect to which the authors belonged. Translations of many English and other works are being produced in great numbers, making it possible even for those who are unacquainted with English to gain some knowledge of the culture of the West. Moreover, books on subjects connected with politics, science, philosophy, morals, history and religion are being constantly issued from the press. A great deal of what is produced may not have great value as literature, but it is all helping to cultivate and enlarge the resources of the language to meet the needs of today. A Hindi society which has its headquarters at Allahabad is the *Sāhitya Sammelan*, which conducts examinations in Hindi of a very high standard and grants diplomas, and is trying to establish purely Hindi schools in all parts of North and Mid-India.

Amongst other societies that are doing much to extend Hindi literature, the *North India Tract Society* and other Christian societies hold an important place. Through the agency of these societies a great deal of Hindi literature has been produced, not only of a directly religious nature, but also stories, biographies, educational books, and books on social

and other subjects. Indian people themselves are often largely unaware how much of the new movements for political freedom, social emancipation, and religious reform are really inspired by Christian ideals. India has seen the vision of a future glory for herself and her children greater even than her past achievements, excellent as these have been. New ideals of righteousness and of duty, of brotherhood and of service have come before her, and inspiration for these has been very largely due to the life and teaching of Christ, who in this, as in so many other ways, is the fulfilment of all that is noble and excellent in Indian life. The ideas of the old mythology, which formed so large a part of the themes of writers in the past, are on the wane, and the past ideals with regard to many other matters are undergoing a change. India is seeking out after a larger, a fuller, a more complete life than she has lived in the past. In this development the vernacular literature is bound to have a most important part to play. The responsibility resting upon all writers, where such great issues are at stake, is very great, but the situation is one which should call forth the very best and noblest work from all who are concerned in the production of literature.

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*Hindi Navagraha.* An account in Hindi by the same authors of nine great Hindi writers, viz. Tulsī Dās, Sur Dās, Dev, Bihārī Lāl, Bhīsham, Kāver Dās, Mātī Rām, Chand Borsāi, and Harichandra. Publishers as above.

*Kavitā Kaumudī.* By Rām Narayn Tripathi. Vol. I deals with the literature down to the time of, but not including, Harichandra, and contains an account of 89 poets and gives copious extracts from their work. Vol. II is not yet published. (Sadhaya Surmulan Office, Allahabad.)

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*Encyclopædia Britannica.* Edition XI. Vol. XIII, pp. 461-491.

*Imperial Gazetteer of India.* Vol. II.

*Linguistic Survey of India.* By George A. Grierson. Contains much useful information as to the language and dialects.

*The Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics.* Contains articles on several of the different sects whose literature is described in this book.

### TRANSLATIONS

Only a small portion of the vast quantity of Hindi literature has been translated into English. The following are some of the translations (the list is not exhaustive) which have been made, and which

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in most cases contain also information as to the authors and their work.

*Translation of the Rāmāyana of Tulsi Dās.* By F. S. Growse.

*Mathurā.* By F. S. Growse. Contains translations of some of the poems of worshippers of Kṛṣṇa.

*The Sikh Religion.* By M. A. Macauliffe. (6 vols.) Contains a translation of the *Gowāh*. (Clarendon Press.)

*A History of the Boomelās.* By W. R. Fagnon. (Calcutta, 1828.) A translation of Lāl Kavi's *Chāsurā Prabodh*.

*The Bijak of Kabīr.* Translation into English by the Rev. Ahmad Shāh.

*The Padmāvatī* of Malik Muhammad Jami. Edited with a commentary, translation, and critical notes, by Sir G. A. Grierson and Mahāmahopādhyāya Sadāshakar Devidāsi. (Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta.)

### TEXTS

It is impossible to give a list of all the Hindi texts which have been published, but the following list of publishers of Hindi texts may be of some use. I am indebted for this list to Pandit Syām Bihārī Mītra, of Allahabad.

1. The Venkateshwara Press, Bombay.  
(Has published a good edition of the *Sar Sagar* of Śrī Dās.)
2. The Newal Kishore Press, Lucknow.
3. The Khadga Vilas Press, Bankipore, Bihar.  
(Has published all the available works of Harichandra.)
4. The Bharat Jivan Press, Benares City.  
(Has issued works of some well-known Hindi poets.)
5. The Bang Basi Press, Hindi Bang Basi Office, Calcutta.  
(Has printed an annotated edition of Bihārī Lal's *Sar Saī*.)
6. The Nirmaya Sagar Press, Bombay.
7. The Indian Press, Allahabad.  
(Has published a good edition of the *Rāmāyana* of Tulsi Dās.)
8. L. Rām Narayan Lal, Publisher and Bookseller, Katra, Allahabad.
9. The Hindi Sāhitya Sammelan Office, Johnson Ganj, Allahabad.
10. The Kāshī Nāgarī Prachārini Sabha, Benares City.  
(Has published editions of Chaud Banzārī's *Rām*, Tulsi Dās's *Rāmāyana*, Bhīsham's works, and a great many other famous Hindi works.)
11. The Bharat Mitra Press, Calcutta.
12. The Belvedere Steam Printing Press, Allahabad.

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